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January 20, 1979

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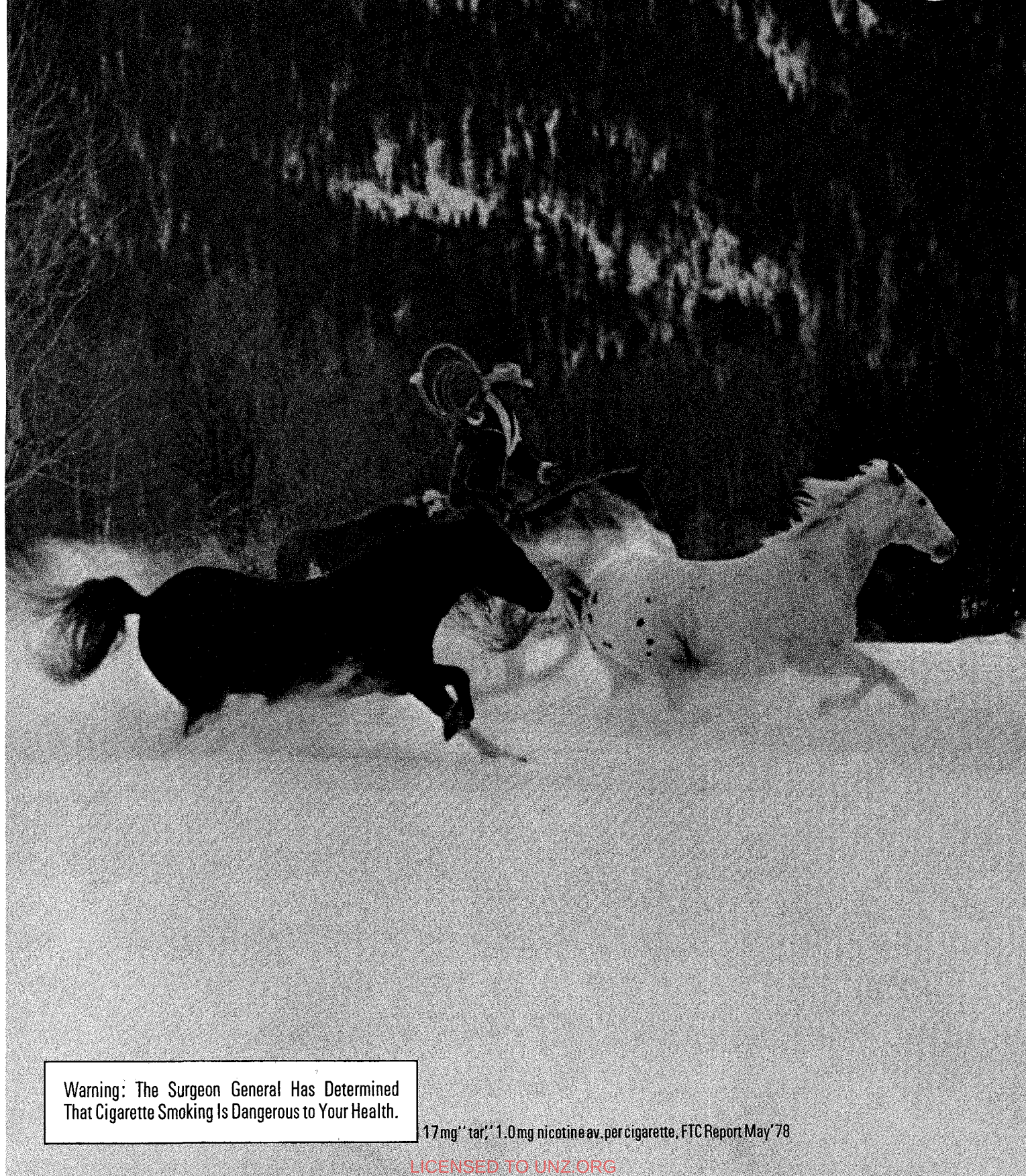
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TRB

from Washington
January 20, 1979



How It Happened

The "Thursday War" began at 9:30 a.m. EST (5:30 p.m. Moscow time) and was over by 2 p.m. There were three parts, the precipitating "Shcherbakov blast" (now widely attributed to mechanical failure), the answering American preemptive strike, the Russian retaliatory strike and then subsequent continuing exchange from surviving launchers. (An unidentified submarine also kept firing into the shambles of Vladivostok next day in a pattern to which its deranged computers had apparently locked it.)

For some time the Russo-American confrontation had been a guessing game with overtones of a 14th-century theological dispute. Each country knew it could destroy the other; each knew the crucial advantage of the first strike. What would the adversary do? The question was of deterrent credibility. It was not merely what Americans believed the Russians believed. It was what the Americans believed the Russians believed the Americans believed. It was like two gutter urchins staring each other down.

One test came on civilian defense. As 1979 started, the Soviets were spending two billion dollars a year for bomb shelters, survival systems and evacuation plans. The US was spending only \$100 million. Were the Russians bluffing? The US civil defense, instituted by Kennedy in 1961, had degenerated; austere survival supplies, water con-

tainers, sanitation kits had deteriorated; food stocks exceeded their shelf life. In the quaint military jargon of the day, LPCCR (Local Plans for the Contingency of Crisis Relocation) were in abeyance. In 1975 the National Academy of Sciences made a study, "Long-Term Worldwide Effects of Multiple Nuclear Weapons Detonations" (L-TWEMNWD, nicknamed L-TW). While a nuclear war would kill 100 million Americans (give or take 20 million), civil defense might save 10 million. A strong lobby, the US Civil Defense Council, told Congress as it assembled in 1979 that "the Federal Government has a moral and legal obligation to protect the population in case a nuclear war should ever occur." Jimmy Carter, to placate hard-liners, and assist SALT II, promised to increase civil defense funds.

News from Moscow that Russia might actually activate some of its civil defense evacuation plans frightened the world. It illustrated Robert S. McNamara's statement that "excessive military spending can erode security rather than enhance it." The tinder was ready for the spark.

The US had 9000 individual nuclear warheads facing the Soviets' 5000 (many with enormous megatonnage), but few could realize what this meant. The Hiroshima-Nagasaki warheads had a yield of about 13 kilotons (a kiloton equals 1000 tons of dynamite). By 1979 the standard US ICBM warhead was 15 times more powerful and would soon carry 30 times the punch. All the conventional bombs from all the US airplanes dropped by all the aviators in World War II amounted to only about two megatons (a megaton equals a million tons of TNT). Half a dozen ordinary present-day nuclear bombs equaled that.

Military experts in each of the superpowers worked out probable consequences of mock nuclear wars. The unclassified US versions presented to Congress showed considerable professional relish under the jargon. Many factors couldn't be "quantified," they said, like side-effects on the ozone layer and on human survival. But America would maintain its capacity for "assured destruction," said national security consultant Sidney D. Brell cheerfully; it would come from the Poseidon/Trident SLBM (Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile) force, "moving quietly and invisibly under the ocean's surface." These underwater missiles could easily "devastate the 200

largest Soviet cities." Furthermore, "there will always exist some lucrative and inviting counterforce targets."

Here's what they expected. First, buildings. The US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency based it on "psi." This means "pounds per square inch" in acronym-speak. When the bomb hit Nagasaki it crumpled up the Mitsuichi Steel and Arms Plant with six psi overpressure. The ACDA estimated that a representative US retaliatory nuclear strike would destroy "65 to 70 percent" of key Soviet production capacity, and achieve perhaps 60 percent collateral damage to non-targeted capacity. Attempts to "harden" above-ground industrial facilities won't work. This would just mean detonating weapons nearer the ground "with only a minor reduction in the area subjected to 10 psi overpressure."

So much for buildings. Now people. Spurgeon Keeny, deputy director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, explained the scenario here, in "quantitative parameters," assuming a Soviet first strike. The US would retaliate with surviving forces (except for 10 to 15 percent kept in reserve). Here the word is "roentgen," a measure of radiation. (Two hundred roentgens produce a 50 percent chance of radiation sickness; 450 produce a 50 percent chance of fatality). There would be 40 to 50 million Soviet fatalities right off, according to the scenario. If the US targeted people instead of military objects, it would be 70 to 85 million. Of 886 Soviet cities of over 25,000 people, 85 to 90 percent of urban housing would be "burned out" and the "typical cities would be covered with radiation doses from 5000 to 30,000 roentgens."

Anybody can play this game. I have suggested it in the "Thursday War." Try it on these long winter evenings. You can shake dice for 10 or 20 million people. Brutal? Don't blame me. We are spending a quarter of our budget on it, to keep peace with terror. It doesn't yield to exact quantitative parameters, the experts admit rather defensively. In addition to immediate estimated fatalities, "there are additional injuries from burns, fire, flying debris, exposure, radiation poisoning, panic and the breakdown of law and order." Then, too, there's always that ozone layer. It preserves life on earth by shielding us from the sun's ultraviolet rays. Large-scale nuclear fallout, according to the National Academy of Science, might injure the layer. That could cause a lot of trouble.

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Contents

TRB from Washington	3	How it Happened
Comment	5	Liberals and Inflation
		Income, Wealth and Inflation
	7	Correspondence
Eliot Marshall	13	The New Feudalism
Morton Kondracke	16	Thanks, But No Thanks
Thomas N. Bethell	18	Was Time, Inc., Bluffing?
Charles Fenyesi	20	Deposing a King
Murray Sayle	21	All the Peanuts in China
		ARTS AND LIVES
Stanley Kauffmann	24	Films: Japanese Master
		Books Considered
Ann Douglas	25	<i>Woman's Proper Place</i> by Sheila Rothman
Richard Gilman	29	<i>Soul on Fire</i> by Eldridge Cleaver
Richard Howard	30	Poem: "A Commission"
John P. Diggins	32	<i>The Last Romantic</i> by William O'Neill
		<i>Crystal Eastman on Women and Revolution</i> edited by Blanche Weisen Cook
Ann Hulbert	34	<i>Secrets and Surprises</i> by Ann Beattie
David Ferry	35	Poem: "Graveyard"
Robert Paul Wolff	36	<i>The Spirit of Liberalism</i> by Harvey C. Mansfield Jr.
Abraham Brumberg	37	<i>Alarm and Hope</i> by Andrei D. Sakharov
Jack Beatty	38	<i>The Good Word and Other Words</i> by Wilfrid Sheed
Brief Reviews	39	Current Fiction:
		<i>The Confessions of Josef Baisz</i> by Dan Jacobson
		<i>Petals of Blood</i> by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o
		<i>Sherbrookes</i> by Nicholas Delbanco
Washington Diarist	43	No Right to Bare Knuckles

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January 20, 1979



Liberals and Inflation

Conservatives suspect correctly that people to their left are not serious about inflation. All appearances support their impression that mainstream politicians and speakers for the left lack either the courage or the understanding or the desire to prescribe a cure for this modern plague. President Carter's inflation program is not serious. Prices have doubled in the past 11 years. If Carter meets his goal of holding inflation to seven percent, he will campaign on this success, and prices will double again in the next 10 years. Carter's "program" itself consists mostly of public displays of earnestness. It barely addresses the underlying causes of inflation. It is an insult to the gods. They will have their revenge.

Conservatives are prepared to pacify the gods with a sacrifice. Their proposed sacrifice is the liberal agenda. Balancing the budget and tightly controlling the money supply will cure inflation. If this means abandoning social welfare programs and inducing an enormous recession or worse, that is simply the hangover after our fiscal and monetary partying of the past four decades. If the experience teaches us to stop indulging, conservatives say, it's worth it. Liberals believe this proposed sacrifice is too great. We suspect correctly that conservatives are a little too free in offering up other people's suffering. But the conservative cure for inflation has this advantage: it will work. We who believe it's worse than the disease must come up with another cure that will work, or admit that we are not serious about inflation.

There may be no real inflation cure that can overcome the paralysis of today's politics. But if the political will was there, we think it would be possible to cure inflation without abandoning the liberal vision of a more compassionate and egalitarian society.

The first sign of seriousness about inflation is understanding why it is bad. The frequent media set pieces on this subject are no help in understanding.

Often staged in supermarkets, where people are shown recoiling in horror from the price labels on packages of meat, they are intended to show how the "average family" is being forced to cut back because of inflation. But the "average family" has not had to cut back at all. Its standard of living has risen almost continually throughout the past decade. The economy has showered dollars on the *average* family faster than it has robbed those dollars of value. The problems with inflation are more subtle. There are three of them, as we see it. All are serious.

The first problem with inflation is its capricious redistributive effect. If the average person manages to keep up with inflation, this means that some individual people are helped by it while others are hurt. There is much scholarly debate about who wins and who loses from inflation. It appears that the conventional wisdom remains true: on the average, debtors win and creditors lose; those who live on wages win, those who live off capital lose. For this reason, some on the left say we should not worry about inflation, because on the average it is hurting the rich and helping the poor. But the largest aggregations of capital in the modern economy are not the stockpiles of the rich; they are trust funds representing the vested pension and life insurance rights of working people. Most of these commitments to workers are expressed in dollar terms, unindexed. If present trends continue, retirement security is a hoax for today's workers. Furthermore, even within the different social classes, the average effect of inflation is made up of some who've done better and some who've done worse. The effect of the past decade's inflation seems to be somewhat random; one major variant is whether or not you have owned a house and a mortgage. But even random losses are unfair to those who suffer them. Sustained inflation violates the losers' social contract with the government. A basic reason for having government at all is to

assure that people can enjoy the benefit of their labor and thrift. In effect, by failing to protect the value of the monetary unit it sponsors, the government is unconstitutionally depriving many people of property without due process of law.

A second problem with inflation is that it hurts everybody by weakening the economy as a whole. The average person has more than kept up with inflation because the economy has continued to expand in real terms. But this real expansion has been much slower than it was until the mid-1960s, and inflation is a major reason why. Economic growth is made possible by innovation and investment. Inflation distorts rational investment decisions by driving money away from productive assets and into assets such as real estate that are more likely to be inflation-proof. Inflation creates uncertainty about the future that discourages businesses from making risky expansion plans. Inflation also encourages people to spend their money rather than to save it, and thereby reduces the amount available for investment. As a result of inflation, society as a whole ends up devoting more of its limited resources to producing consumer items, and fewer to building the factories and developing the technology that will make possible a higher level of consumption in the future.

The worst problem with inflation—even at the moderate rate of the past decade—is its disintegrating effect on the social fabric. Even those who manage to keep up with inflation, or beat it, incur a psychic cost. Economic life begins to resemble the world of Alice in Wonderland, where you must run very fast just to stay in the same place. Desperate calculation becomes necessary to achieve what a stable currency formerly guaranteed. Inevitably this added element of tension in social life weakens the bonds of general good will. This general good will provides the political support for liberal designs to help the less fortunate. Inflation, therefore, erodes this support.

A particularly insidious social effect of inflation is to encourage the trend Eliot Marshall, elsewhere in this issue, labels “the new feudalism.” The new feudalism is the underside of what admiring political scientists used to refer to as American “pluralism.” It is the fragmentation of society into powerful interest groups. Political life becomes a struggle between these groups, undermining concern for the individual on the one hand, and blurring the vision of what’s good for society as a whole on the other. Inflation accelerates this process. Monopoly power in the market and political power in Washington are the two best hedges against inflation. In the past decade middle-class members of established unions have beaten inflation; poorer nonunionized workers have fallen behind. Social security recipients have beaten inflation; welfare recipients have not. The lesson is not lost on those who are struggling to keep up.

These are some of the damaging effects of the creeping inflation we’ve been suffering from during the past decade. But creeping inflation is not a stable arrangement. The recession we are about to enter merely in order to hold inflation to seven percent would have been enough to eliminate it completely 10 years ago. In the future, unless there is a permanent cure, the dosage will have to increase or the fever will get worse. At higher rates of inflation, all the symptoms get worse. People’s savings are wiped out. Capital investment stops. Competing groups bring unbearable pressure on the political system.

How did we get into this mess? There is not as much disagreement about this among the sages as you might think. The disagreement is about which way out of it would be the most effective and least unpleasant.

There has always been inflation since people began using money. The American economy has suffered regular bouts of inflation in the past, sometimes at rates higher than any reached so far in the current round. But past inflations alternated with periods of rapid deflation, in which the general price level sank as far as it had previously risen. In 1930 prices were about what they had been in 1770, although in the interim they occasionally had been twice as high. These fluctuations in the price level coincided with the cycles of prosperity in real terms, which came to be regarded as natural and even inevitable. High aggregate demand would stimulate prosperity and growth—and price inflation, as the production of goods and services struggled to keep up with the demand for them. Then after some turning point (the most noticeable and easily explained being the end of a war) aggregate demand would shrink, producing lower prices—along with economic contraction, unemployment and widespread misery.

All this stopped about four decades ago. Since then we have had periods of growth and prosperity alternating with periods of nothing more than mild stagnation. But there has been no significant drop in the general price level since the early 1930s.

What happened in the 1930s was, of course, what is called the Keynesian revolution. Society realized it did not have to tolerate the misery that came during periods of slack demand. Government could stimulate demand for goods and services, and therefore for human labor, by the simple expedient of buying more goods and services itself (which it had been doing unconsciously during wartime anyway). Since the recipients of government dollars would turn around and spend most of these dollars again, and so on, each extra dollar spent by the government would add several dollars of demand to the economy. But the success of this trick depended on how the government chose to pay for its added purchases. If it simply increased taxes or borrowed money already available in the lending markets, it would be using dollars that probably would have been spent anyway in the course of the year. For

Correspondence

The message of Jesus

To the editors:

Thank you for the excellent column, "Christmas Diarist" (*TNR*, December 23 & 30). It contained one of the best statements about our inability to "prove" God and of the futility in trying that I have ever seen.

Two observations are in order regarding Jesus. The author suggests that Jesus would "probably be done in again if he returned." I would suggest that we are too "civilized" to crucify him; we would simply have him committed to a hospital for the emotionally unstable to be rehabilitated.

Regarding the author's observation that in the tale of the prodigal son, the Father not only welcomes back the errant child no matter what he has done, but that his brother profits nothing from staying home, working hard and being good: the older boy, at the sounds of the party, did not rush to the house to find out what was going on, but refused to even speak to his Father. The Father, however, as he had done for the prodigal, came out to the son to try to reconcile the broken relationship. This is the message of Jesus. God is always making the move to heal broken relationships, and we good folk who resent his doing that with bad folk need to have our relationships restored by accepting those same gifts offered to the prodigal, but always available to us.

W. Michael Biklen
The United Methodist Church
Lake Park, Iowa

Serious seminars

To the editors:

The point of Morton Kondracke's article ("Freshman Orientation," *TNR*, December 16)—i.e. that the kind of orientation new members received emphasized getting themselves reelected rather than solving public problems—was seriously misleading. While his specific references to the subjects covered in some of the Republican and Democratic orientation programs were accurate, they were highly selective and limited. He omitted entirely any reference to the extensive policy seminars provided for new members on a bipartisan basis, seminars which covered 20 of the principal public policy issues which face the

Congress—from energy and the economy to urban and foreign policy—seminars which were taught by many of the country's leading thinkers and practitioners in these areas, seminars for five full days in an academic environment well removed from the political and practical intrusions found in Washington.

I refer to the public policy seminars at Harvard University during the week of December 10-16, cosponsored by the University's Institute of Politics and the Select Committee on Congressional Operations of the House of Representatives. This was an intensive, mind-stretching experience and the time devoted by new members to this program far exceeded the time they spent on the non-policy matters referred to by Mr. Kondracke.

Your writer also failed to note the orientation programs provided their respective new members by both the Democratic leadership and the Republican leadership in the House—programs which stressed fundamental organizational and procedural concerns such as the rules of the House, how committees work, floor procedures, and the roles of the Caucus and of House officers.

Additional opportunities for serious orientation of new members in both policy and procedural questions will be offered immediately following the convening of the 96th Congress on January 15. The Select Committee will present, on a bipartisan basis, a comprehensive series of panel discussions on the legislative process, ethical standards, and the organization and work of congressional offices, among other subjects. In addition, the Brookings Institution will sponsor a three-day program for new members featuring many of the best economists and social scientists in the country on such issues as energy, inflation and unemployment.

Jack Brooks
House of Representatives
Washington, DC

The IRS ruling on private schools

To the editors:

I believe that Anne G. Witte has well stated IRS's position in the matter of reexamining the tax-exempt status of

certain private and parochial academies ("Subsidizing Segregation," *TNR*, December 23 & 30).

However, in her analysis, she makes the same mistake which the IRS also makes, namely, to infer that the absence of minority students automatically indicates the presence of racism. I must agree that this is indeed the case in many private and parochial educational institutions. In such cases as these, the government, the private sector and the church have a responsibility to speak out and to urge the introduction of standards that are fair and equitable for all parties. However, there are other concerns that can contribute to the creation of a situation in which, to the IRS, it may appear as though racial bias is present. Such may be the presence of higher academic standards than minority (and many non-minority) students can attain. Further, cost factors are very much a consideration. Thus, it seems to be an imbalanced approach to the "problem" to assume that all private or parochial academies created or experiencing significant growth during a specified period are furthering racism and the segregationist mindset. It is precisely this imbalance which many of us protest. Indeed at least some, especially Christian, educational institutions have made a valiant effort to make their services available to minority students in their area. However, because of conditions wholly unrelated to racial bias, minority (and, again, many non-minority) students have been unable to take advantage of the services these institutions are able to provide.

The real point at issue for many of us is twofold. In the first place it has to do with the federal government's assumed right to control educational practices in this country, especially through using the IRS as its enforcer. A second concern is with the matter of standards. Many of us believe it is wrong for the federal government to create standards of the lowest common denominator and impose them on educational institutions across the board. If, through the IRS, the federal government can do this in the matter of segregation, it is just a step away from doing this in matters of curriculum and other such concerns. Indeed, we see the effect of federal standards on the public sector and we shudder at the possibility of this becoming true in the private sector as well.

T.M. Moore
Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church
Fort Lauderdale, Florida

the government to spend them instead would provide almost no extra stimulus to the economy. To get that extra kick, the government had to go into deficit, and it had to print enough new money to replace what its borrowing took out.

In theory, the technique for reducing unemployment by damping economic downswings should have worked in reverse to reduce inflation caused by excessive economic upswings. In times of voracious demand for goods and services, the government could spend less than it brings in by taxes, and keep tight control over the amount of money flowing through the system. If done skillfully, this technique should reduce total demand just enough to keep it from exceeding the economy's actual capacity to produce—thus preventing "demand-pull" inflation—without sending the economy into a self-feeding contraction. The result should be an economy operating at close to full capacity, with little inflation and little unemployment. But it hasn't worked out that way.

There seem to be five reasons why the partial success of the Keynesian revolution has left us a legacy of chronic inflation. One problem is that as a tool for curing unemployment, fiscal policy is a blunt instrument. Unemployment really means an excess supply of labor—in particular, unskilled and semiskilled labor. Yet federal deficit spending stimulates demand not just for what is in excess supply, but for everything. Long before unemployment is brought down to an acceptable level by this method, excess demand for other things has begun to drive prices up. But now that we know the government *can* avoid massive unemployment if it wants to, we insist that it do so. So there is an inevitable tendency of government to keep the entire economy overstimulated, in order to keep up demand for the one factor—labor—that is in excess supply. What's worse, technological progress and increased opportunities for trade with underdeveloped countries reduce the demand for unskilled and semiskilled labor more and more, meaning that unless the supply is reduced, more and more stimulus is needed to achieve the same modest result.

A second problem is that the federal budget isn't just a fiscal tool. Political reality makes the annual deficit easy to increase but hard to decrease. Every new item in the budget rapidly develops a constituency of beneficiaries and administrators that makes it politically difficult to cut back. Raising taxes instead is rarely more appealing. President Carter has decided that, for fiscal reasons, the federal deficit next year should be less than \$30 billion. (In fact, it should be much smaller.) But he can't just twiddle the dials and hit this amount. As a result of this fact of life—largely the result of our feudalist politics—fiscal policy is used properly as a stimulus far more often than it is used properly as a damper.

A third problem is that our economy is less and less

one of free markets responding to demand and supply pressures in the textbook fashion. This is partly the result of misguided government policies (coddling certain industries), partly the result of wise government policies (encouraging unionism) and largely inevitable in any event. Because of widespread market monopoly power and group political power, many prices tend to go up even when demand is slack. This is called "cost-push" inflation. When a union in a major industry gets a wage increase, there are only three places that money can come from: from productivity gains, from the profits of stockholders and salaries of executives, or from a price increase for the product. After more than a generation of more or less steady economic prosperity, with no major contractions to "discipline" the workers, unions are in the habit of asking for a regular wage increase every year even when productivity has not increased, and management is in the habit of passing the cost along to customers. Cost-push inflation responds very reluctantly to traditional demand management techniques. Because it is widespread in our economy, standard doses of austerity have little impact on rising prices.

As part of their evangelical approach, President Carter's inflation fighters would like to convince unions and management that this kind of "unjustified" wage and price increase is self-defeating, because when everybody does it the result is general price inflation. But everybody cannot do it. The net real effect of cost-push inflation is to redistribute wealth from those who are at the mercy of the market to those who aren't—that is, from those who are unorganized to organized power groups.

A fourth reason the general price level goes up is that individual prices almost never go down anymore. Even in an economy with no general inflation, prices would be constantly changing to reflect the changing relative values of different items. This "churning" of prices is essential to a healthy and efficient economy. One year orange juice is scarce because of a frost while Coca-Cola is plentiful; the next year orange harvests are bountiful but Coke production suffers from shortages of pig's blood, or whatever. Ideally, prices would "churn" by going up and down. When the economy's structure makes it difficult for any price to go down, prices adjust relative to each other by leapfrogging upward. The end of fixed exchange rates in 1971 increased the amount of "churning" among national currencies, and probably has contributed to inflation in all the industrialized countries.

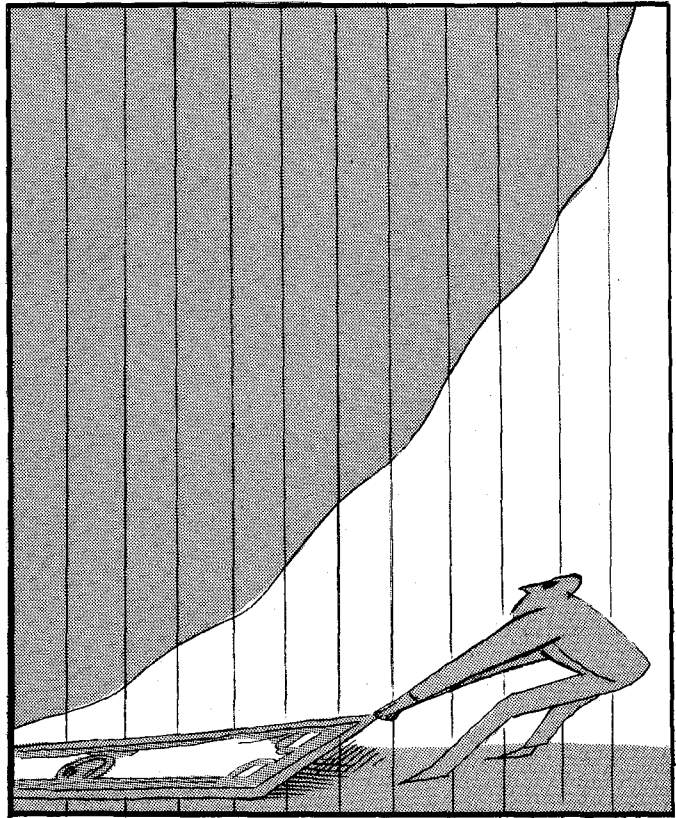
The reasons prices rarely go down are complex. But in general, the knowledge that the government will act to prevent a major depression, and stands ready to reduce the pain of unemployment with insurance, makes even those without monopoly power unwilling to respond to weak demand by actually *reducing* the price or wage they're willing to accept.

A final difficulty has become particularly severe in

the past few years: inflationary expectations. The longer inflation continues, the harder it is to cure. In the mid-1970s, when the worst recession since the Great Depression produced only a modest slowdown in the rate of price increases, people became convinced that inflation is here to stay. Furthermore, after more than a decade of experience with it, people have learned how the inflation game is played. When people expect inflation to continue, and get wily about it, all the other tendencies that cause inflation become more severe. Inflationary expectations make people spend money rather than save it. This stimulates aggregate demand in the economy exactly when it should be reduced. And this demand is immune to traditional methods of dampening. High interest rates don't deter people from borrowing—let alone encourage them to save—if they think the inflation rate will be even higher. Even fear of a recession won't stop people from spending and going into debt if they think their money is rapidly becoming worthless. This is why consumer credit is at a record high, and no level of mortgage rates seems high enough to discourage people from rushing into real estate. The only people who get discouraged are those planning capital investments that won't pay off until the increasingly uncertain future.

Inflationary expectations also exacerbate cost-push inflation, by hardening the determination of those with market and political power to get their annual increases, and softening the resistance of those who might oppose them. They make price decreases even more unthinkable. Perhaps worst of all, they carry a high political cost by giving many people a vested interest in seeing inflation continue. Those who are mortgaged for 30 years at 11 percent will have no desire for painful steps that would slow the increase in their incomes and the value of their properties. Continuing inflation creates a widening gulf between those who have made their peace with it and those who are ever-more-desperate to see it stop.

Monetary purists would say there's a sixth explanation of our current inflation that makes the other five irrelevant: the supply of money in the economy has risen faster than the production of goods and services, and higher money prices for these goods and services is the inevitable result. Connoisseurs of this debate still quarrel about the exact relationship between the price level and the money supply. But it's certainly true that all the other inflationary forces have been given room to operate by increases in the money supply. And it's also true that the government can control the money supply pretty closely if it wants to. But to say that inflation has been caused by too much money is about as helpful as saying our excessive energy consumption is caused by importing too much oil. The government can control oil imports, too, if it wants to. All it has to do is shut off the spigot around April, or whenever it thinks we've imported our quota for the year. There would be widespread chaos and ruin, but our oil import



drawing by David Suter

problem would be solved. A more sensible (though more difficult) solution, most agree, is to reduce the economy's *demand* for oil, and to let reduced imports follow naturally from that. Our economy runs on money somewhat in the same way it runs on oil. Shutting off the money supply without curtailing the forces that create excess demand for money would create a similar amount of chaos and ruin. Even a gradual slowing of monetary growth, without other steps, would affect real economic growth more than it would affect inflation.

The other traditional remedy for inflation—fiscal policy—is equally unavailing, taken alone, in today's sort of inflation. Governor Jerry Brown wants to wipe out inflation by the simple expedient of a constitutional amendment forbidding the federal government to run a deficit. His theory, if he has one, must be that this masterstroke will end price rises by reducing aggregate demand in the economy. But all the modern economic realities already discussed—many of them, we must admit, unleashed by the Keynesian revolution itself—reduce the effectiveness of this tool. In our present circumstances, according to Robert Solow of MIT, enduring one percent extra unemployment for three years would reduce inflation by only between half of one percent and 1.75 percent. To eliminate inflation by demand management would require vast suffering. Brown apparently agrees with some other conservatives that such a cataclysm is essential, and possibly inevitable anyway if we continue on our present course. They see the techniques of artificial demand stimulation as a doomed attempt to get a free lunch, and they believe that the bill has finally arrived. One way or

Income, Wealth and Inflation

Three years ago the United States celebrated the 200th year of its independence from the king of England. Three months ago it marked another historical milestone. In October 1978, the consumer price index, the best measurement we have of inflation, crossed for the first time the 200 mark, based on a 1967 figure of 100. What this means is that a dollar buys only half as much now as it did 11 years ago. Or, put another way, the cost of living has doubled since 1967. The last 11 years have been the longest period of sustained inflation in American history.

This great anniversary provides an occasion to measure the effects of sustained inflation. It is common to see comparisons of prices years back with prices today, the implication being that everybody is worse off because everything now costs more. The accompanying chart is intended to dispel this oversimplification, by comparing how much spending power people have now with how much they had in 1967. Some people live off wage income and some people live at least partially off the return to capital. To get a rough idea of who really has lost ground because of the recent years' inflation, and who has stayed even or even gotten ahead, we need to measure both the changes in incomes of different job categories and the changes in value of large accumulations of wealth. Reaching the 200 mark provides an easy measure: if your numbers haven't doubled, you've lost out; if they've more than doubled, you're ahead of the game.

Most people in blue-collar jobs have more than kept up with the cost of living. But some have done much better than others. Steelworkers' average wages have risen 265 percent since 1967—possibly a reflection of the steel industry's protected position in the economy. The wages of construction workers, by contrast, have only slightly more than doubled—most likely because

of chronically high unemployment in the construction industry. Without inflation, wage rates would adjust gently upward and downward to reflect these sorts of factors. In an inflationary economy, relative adjustments are made by different rates of increase.

The pattern of salaries in the federal government suggests the possibility of a subtle class bias among those who figure the formulas for setting pay levels. Since 1969, federal salaries have been set with the ostensible intent of ensuring "comparability" with the private sector. Comparability adjustments are made automatically twice a year, but the government provides no "cost-of-living" raises as such. In real terms, the government's clerks and secretaries are worse off now than in 1967: their pay has increased only 89 percent. Their bosses, on the other hand, have done quite well. Salaries of the highest non-political managers have risen by 113 percent. Middle-level bureaucrats have kept up almost precisely with the cost of living. Of course 1967 is just an arbitrary milestone and not a golden age of equity in which relative wage rates, in the government or elsewhere, were necessarily the correct ones.

Measuring the effect of inflation on those who live off capital is a trickier business. Changes in the total value of somebody's assets don't tell you how much each year's total return was consumed and how much was left untouched to make up for the eroding value of the principle. Furthermore, most private holders of great wealth don't care to reveal their net worth. But well endowed non-profit institutions must make this information public. They face the same challenge of living off their assets while protecting them from erosion in value, and it's reasonable to assume that wealthy institutions and individuals get a similar quality and variety of investment advice. So looking at large institutional en-

dowments may give some idea of how inflation has affected the very rich (although non-profit institutions enjoy the luxury of not having to pay taxes on "profits" that are really only making up for inflation).

The nation's wealthiest university, Harvard, has suffered a substantial erosion in the value of its endowment. In dollar terms, it has increased by only 34 percent. This means that in real terms, the value of Harvard's endowment has actually declined by a third. But the fortunes of capital holders have varied even more than those of wage earners. Stanford University, the "Harvard of the West," has increased the market value of its endowment by 115 percent since 1967. The University of Texas has lured several top scholars away from Cambridge in recent years, the principal inducement being the growing wealth of the school. UT's endowment has grown by 110 percent since 1967, making it the second richest school in the country. Maybe Harvard can take some comfort in the bad luck of its oldest rival. Yale's endowment has actually fallen by \$700,000, which means in real terms it is now worth less than half of what it was in 1967.

Both the Ford and Rockefeller foundations have suffered declines in the dollar value of their endowments. In real terms, the reduction has been disastrous. With adjustments for inflation, the Ford Foundation today is worth less than a third of what it was worth 11 years ago. Ford has had to reduce its annual spending from \$250 million in 1967 to \$150 million this year in an effort to stanch the bleeding. The Rockefeller Foundation's net worth has been cut by more than half. Both of these foundations, however, have a conscious policy of dipping into their endowments every year, instead of merely paying out the income earned from them.

Why the big differences in how such endowments have fared? It all depends, naturally, on how the institution in question invested its money. Harvard,

another, they believe, inflation will end the way nature always had ended it, and the longer we put it off the worse the suffering will be. A proposal with equivalent logic, which Brown might consider endorsing, would be to curb the population explosion that comes with medical advances in developing countries by introducing new strains of malaria.

Properly recoiling from the prospect of massive unemployment, many on the left (and the occasional

flailing politician) are attracted to wage and price controls. In theory, controls can be effective against inflation of the cost-push sort. As Robert Lekachman has said ("The Case for Controls," *TNR*, October 14), when prices aren't responding to supply and demand anyhow, the question is not whether they should be artificially set but rather who does the setting. Furthermore, controls can dispel inflationary expectations, at least until the controls collapse.

	1967	1978	Percentage increase (nominal terms)	Percentage increase (real terms)
Consumer price index	100	200.9	100%	
Dow Jones industrial average (range)	786-943	742-908		
Harvard University endowment	\$1,038,000,000	\$1,393,000,000	34%	-50%
Stanford University endowment	243,000,000	523,000,000	115%	8%
Yale University endowment (1968)	545,700,000	545,000,000	-2%	-50%
University of Texas permanent fund	495,964,000	1,043,320,000	110%	3%
University of Chicago endowment	287,000,000	283,000,000	-14%	-51%
Ford Foundation endowment	3,500,000,000	2,000,000,000	-42%	-72%
Rockefeller Foundation endowment	802,223,000	727,232,000	-9%	-55%
Steelworker average hourly wage	\$3.58	\$9.50	165%	33%
Coalminer average hourly wage	\$3.72	\$9.60	158%	29%
Autoworker average hourly wage	\$3.61	\$8.90	146%	23%
Construction worker average hourly wage	\$4.04	\$8.48	109%	5%
Federal employee annual salary:				
GS-5 (clerical)	\$ 5,565	\$10,507	89%	-6%
GS-12 (white-collar professional)	\$11,461	\$23,087	101%	0%
GS-16 (non-political manager) median	\$20,982	\$44,756	113%	7%
Doctor annual net income (self-employed)	\$34,730	\$70,000	102%	1%
Dentist average annual net income (self-employed)	\$24,740	\$43,033 (1976)	74%	-13%
Washington Post reporter (with five years' experience) minimum weekly salary	\$165	\$503	205%	52%
Wall Street law firm starting salary	\$11,000	\$29,000	164%	31%

for example, has put most of its funds in the stock market, which has performed poorly in recent years. Financial Vice President Thomas O'Brien says that the university used to have 60-40 ratio of money in stocks and bonds, but recently has moved to change it to roughly 50-50. The Rockefeller Foundation's Theodore Frye says if he had to do it over again, he'd put more money in Treasury bills and less in stocks. What about real estate, a booming commodity in recent years? "I'm glad we didn't get into real estate investment trusts, because they lost their shirts," he said. "You'd have to manage your own real estate to ever

make any money at it." But Frye still thinks the stock market is the best long-run hedge against inflation. "In the previous 30 years [before 1966], the stock market was a fantastic hedge."

Rod Adams, Stanford's finance director, credits his school's financial health to an investment strategy tilted toward high-yield stocks, rather than growth stocks. "The people involved in the early 1950s pushed for a high-yielding endowment," he says. "They didn't do it with inflation in mind, but it turned out to be a reasonably optimal strategy for coping with it." Adams says the university commissioned a study a couple of

years ago, which concluded that the high-yield "tilt" provided a higher income without sacrificing anything in appreciation over the long term.

The University of Texas's success owes to considerably less complex factors. The basis of its "permanent fund" is two million acres of Texas land, much of which produces oil and gas. In 1973 the university got a bonanza. From a financial standpoint, UT is probably healthier than any school in the country. "We put none of our yield back into the endowment," says a cheerful James Colvin, the financial vice president. "We spend it all."

But controls cannot cure demand-pull inflation; they can only hide it temporarily. In 1971 President Nixon used controls to disguise the fact that he was pumping up the economy before the election. When the controls came off, prices spurted forward. Furthermore, even the best-administered controls must be either tremendously inefficient and unfair or tremendously complicated. A rigid ceiling on all price increases thwarts the natural readjustment of relative prices that must go

on in even an inflation-free economy. The inevitable result is inefficiency, shortages and black markets. But a more flexible system, in which exemptions and special treatment are available, would place a greater premium than ever on having political or market power, and therefore would greatly increase the feudal pressures caused by inflation itself.

So-called "voluntary" guidelines of the sort we have now are as bad as mandatory controls if they work, and

worse if they don't. The distortions and pressures are exactly the same in both cases, and the voluntary nature of guidelines doesn't make the process of refining the rules and granting exceptions any less complex. There's no reason to suppose the people who chose to ignore voluntary guidelines are the same ones who would qualify for special treatment under mandatory controls. Even ineffective voluntary guidelines might have some impact on inflationary expectations, if people were stupid. But people are not stupid. In fact it's apparent the guidelines, along with the other elements of our current evangelical approach to inflation fighting, are actually increasing inflationary expectations—and therefore inflation itself—by convincing people that the government either can't or won't do anything real to cure it.

A credible liberal program for inflation would require severe changes in the way this country does business, both in the government and in the private sector. Some of these suggestions fit nicely into the traditional liberal agenda. Others are more painful. Almost all are politically impossible right now. But the alternatives are either today's slow drift toward economic stagnation and political strain, or an economic catastrophe (purposely induced or heedlessly brought on) in which the poor would suffer the worst. The goal should be to reduce the government's temptation to run huge deficits that artificially stimulate demand; to make the private economy more responsive to market forces that can restrain prices; and to bring back economic growth.

The cornerstone of a liberal inflation program should be a government-guaranteed job for anyone who can work, and a guaranteed decent minimum annual income for everyone. There's no need to be doctrinaire about the details of a federal jobs program: retraining, subsidies to private employers, direct creation of federal jobs all should be tried. The important thing is a genuine commitment, as opposed to the rhetorical allegiance we now tolerate. The guaranteed income plan should operate through a negative income tax or an equivalent straightforward cash transfer scheme.

A federal jobs program is a way to attack unemployment directly without purposely overstimulating the whole economy. It increases demand for the commodity that is in excess supply—unskilled and semiskilled labor—without causing as much increase in the demand for what is not in excess supply. Therefore it is less likely to set off a round of demand-pull inflation than pursuing the same goal through a traditional fiscal stimulus such as a tax cut or a general spending spree.

But a huge new government initiative like this cannot be stacked on top of everything the federal government already spends money on. It will be expensive in itself. And a jobs program will only reduce demand-pull inflation if the government can cut back on spending when economic conditions apart from

unemployment call for less stimulus. Right now the government has no such self-discipline. To get it back would require scraping away half a century's encrustation of transfer programs, explicit and hidden subsidies, tax concessions and direct spending arrangements. This plethora of schemes to improve somebody-or-other's welfare makes it impossible for the government to control the total amount it spends. Furthermore, many of them are useless in their own right.

It is foolish for liberals to take their dying stand on present social welfare arrangements, and to attack any criticism of them as reactionary and immoral. Once the government has guaranteed everybody a job and enough money to lead a decent life, it should be possible in good conscience to question whether much of what contributes to the government deficit now is really part of the liberal vision, or merely part of our feudal politics. This includes legal services and other patronizing in-kind benefits for the poor. It includes cherished middle-class subsidies as varied as the home mortgage interest deduction and Amtrak's annual deficit. It includes excessive veterans' benefits and the daft social security system. In fiscal 1977, federal transfer programs alone cost \$248 billion, or more than the redolent figure of \$1000 a person. We believe a courageous reassessment could pay for a generous universal jobs and income security plan, and bring the federal budget under control as well.

In its relation with the private sector, the government contributes to cost-push inflation by many policies that insulate industries from the pressures of the market and discourage them from operating efficiently. The Carter administration seems to think that repeating this theme often enough can be a substitute for acting upon it. Last week, for example, the administration decided not to urge repeal of the Davis-Bacon Act, an absurd law which artificially inflates wage rates in the construction industry, because of feared opposition from organized labor. Every protectionist measure has a constituency. The only hope of pacifying anyone is to display an impartial determination to eliminate them all. This includes price supports for farmers, trade barriers for steel and television makers and dozens of similar policies. Liberals needn't be ashamed of endorsing a taste of the free market for these coddled industries.

A rigorous review of government price-setting policies should even include a restudy of the minimum wage laws. The dispute among economists cannot be summarized, let alone settled, here. But if a generous guaranteed income program existed, the statutory minimum wage probably would contribute more to unemployment and inflation than it would to worker welfare.

Government regulations of industry raise a trickier problem. The most inflationary regulations are those that help industries to fix prices and exclude competition, such as the ICC's trucking rules. These should go,

and the Carter administration has made some real achievements in this area. But conservatives use inflation as an excuse to attack environmental and worker safety regulations. Last week, while passing over the egregious Davis-Bacon Act, the administration put off new regulations of strip mining. Safety and environmental rules may well be expensive, but they are not "inflationary" if the benefit in worker health and a cleaner environment is greater than the cost. Closer cost-benefit analysis may show that in some cases regulators have been overzealous, but the cost should not be labeled "inflationary" as if the benefit did not exist at all.

There are some industries in which the government's abstinence from regulation clearly is inflationary. The outstanding example is health. A recent survey of doctors showed that most don't know the costs of the most common lab tests they order for hospitalized patients. Our health care structure is a recipe for unrestrained inflation: the consumer doesn't pay the bill (insurers or the government do that); the consumer doesn't usually decide what services to consume (the doctor does that); and even the person who decides has no idea what the services cost. Health care does not operate in anything even faintly resembling the free market. Whether by massive restructuring of the industry or by simple price controls, the government must move directly to limit medical costs. Another expensive item whose price is set with no relation to supply and demand is imported oil. The government should stop ignoring opportunities to encourage the breakup of the OPEC cartel.

A final prescription for inflation is economic growth. We must make regular substantial increases in national output a feature of our economy again. The annual wage increases demanded and received by unionized workers would not be inflationary if they were matched by gains in productivity, as they have been in the past. People *are* entitled to an annual raise if the economy is expanding annually too—as it should be. It's evidence of our present inflationary malaise that regular wage increases are considered to be as distasteful as regular price increases. And of course a growing economy means growing tax revenues, which can pay for the liberal agenda.

There is no reason why economic growth should be thought of as a conservative issue. But there is also no reason why liberals, in agreeing with conservatives about the importance of increasing prosperity, must accept the conservative prescriptions, which consist primarily of tax breaks for owners of capital. The most direct way to increase productivity is by putting unemployed people to work, something a government jobs program would achieve. Every one percent of unemployment represents \$60 billion a year of lost production. Experiments in worker control are another promising left-wing approach to the productivity problem. An even more radical vision would be a

rearrangement of the present social incentive structure that wastes so many creative minds by diverting them into unproductive fields such as the law.

Conservatives, as we say, have their own cure for inflation. They will scoff at any alternative vision, especially if it involves any major new government initiatives. They will suggest that liberals have learned nothing at all since 1933. And indeed, a belief that inflation can be cured without abandoning the liberal agenda requires faith that the government can play an aggressive role in improving the national welfare. We still have that faith.

Group think explained.

The New Feudalism

A new strain of feudalism has taken root in the US and spread through much of the private economy and the government. It is a system of economic self-defense, one that has been around for a long time, but has become more important in the 1970s because the nation has developed a persistent problem—inflation—which the government seems unable to master. Vigilante methods of fighting it have become popular. Each new wave of inflation seems to erode the authority of national economic policy and strengthen the power of the independent fiefdoms.

Americans believe with something akin to religious faith that they are entitled to a stable income and a steadily improving material quality of life. In order to keep this faith intact, they are signing up in droves to join self-defense leagues that promise to keep their members abreast of inflation, or—if they are powerful—a few steps ahead of it. In the way that people of the Middle Ages joined together to secure civil peace, people today band together to secure little fortresses of prosperity in the chaos of the modern economy. Few middle-class families live outside the protective walls of a major institution today.

There is safety in numbers. An economy as group-ridden as ours does not treat individual wage earners very kindly. However, it does treat individuals with a little respect if they are part of one of those large groups which through political clout has won economic privileges not available to the ordinary rabble.

Consider how health insurance works. A person who does not belong to a union, doesn't work for the government and hasn't been able to find a job in one of the large and generous corporations must buy his own health insurance out of pocket. Individual health insurance costs far more than the same or better

protection purchased as part of a group plan. If a person loses his job, and if he isn't poor enough to receive medicaid, he will probably have to give up health insurance as an unaffordable luxury. Yet people inside an economic fortress like the US Civil Service have their health insurance paid for by the taxpayer. They are also well protected against losing their jobs. The fact that health insurance is one of the common privileges that come with membership in a special group, and so hard to get as an individual, drives people into the protective arms of these groups.

One piece of evidence that feudalism is on the rise is the fact that the number of inflation-shielded salaries is growing. According to the Labor Department, half the people in the US (counting dependents as well) now receive economic benefits that are linked to the official index of inflation, the Consumer Price Index.

When the CPI increases by one percent, the government alone must increase its payments to employees and beneficiaries by one billion dollars. More than 8.5 million workers receive salaries that are pegged to the CPI, and in the single year of 1976, new CPI wage escalator clauses were written into 51 contracts. This added 281,000 workers to the protected ranks, but at the same time 84,000 lost their protection that year. The net increase was about 200,000, a large slice of the work force.

Big economic blocs have been active in the US for many years. One of the oldest and most powerful is the farm lobby, whose long campaign for federal price supports serves as a model for any ambitious seeker of government favors. Bankers, railroad builders and steel tycoons have had their day. Although there is nothing novel in the existence of such blocs, there is something different about the focus and the prevalence of their power today.

There are more of these groups than ever before, demanding special protections of an appalling variety and specificity. They talk about the Constitution and the importance of upholding certain moral principles, but they usually have a few precise economic demands to make of the nation as well. The executive branch must dicker not only with farm lobbies, but also with aerospace lobbies, ethnic groups, gay rights lobbies, the usual religious powers and a herd of special lobbies such as the motorboat and recreational vehicle users. This last group flexed its muscles when President Carter suggested that the nation might save energy by pricing gasoline at a premium for nonessential uses. His modest proposal was beaten to a shapeless blob.

There are handicapped lobbies, welfare lobbies, pensioners' lobbies, doctors' lobbies, business associations and a seeming infinity of others. I know an ex-official of the Civil Aeronautics Board whose days in that agency were haunted by a group that imported Korean orphans into the US for adoption. The reason this group chose to attack the CAB is not hard to guess;

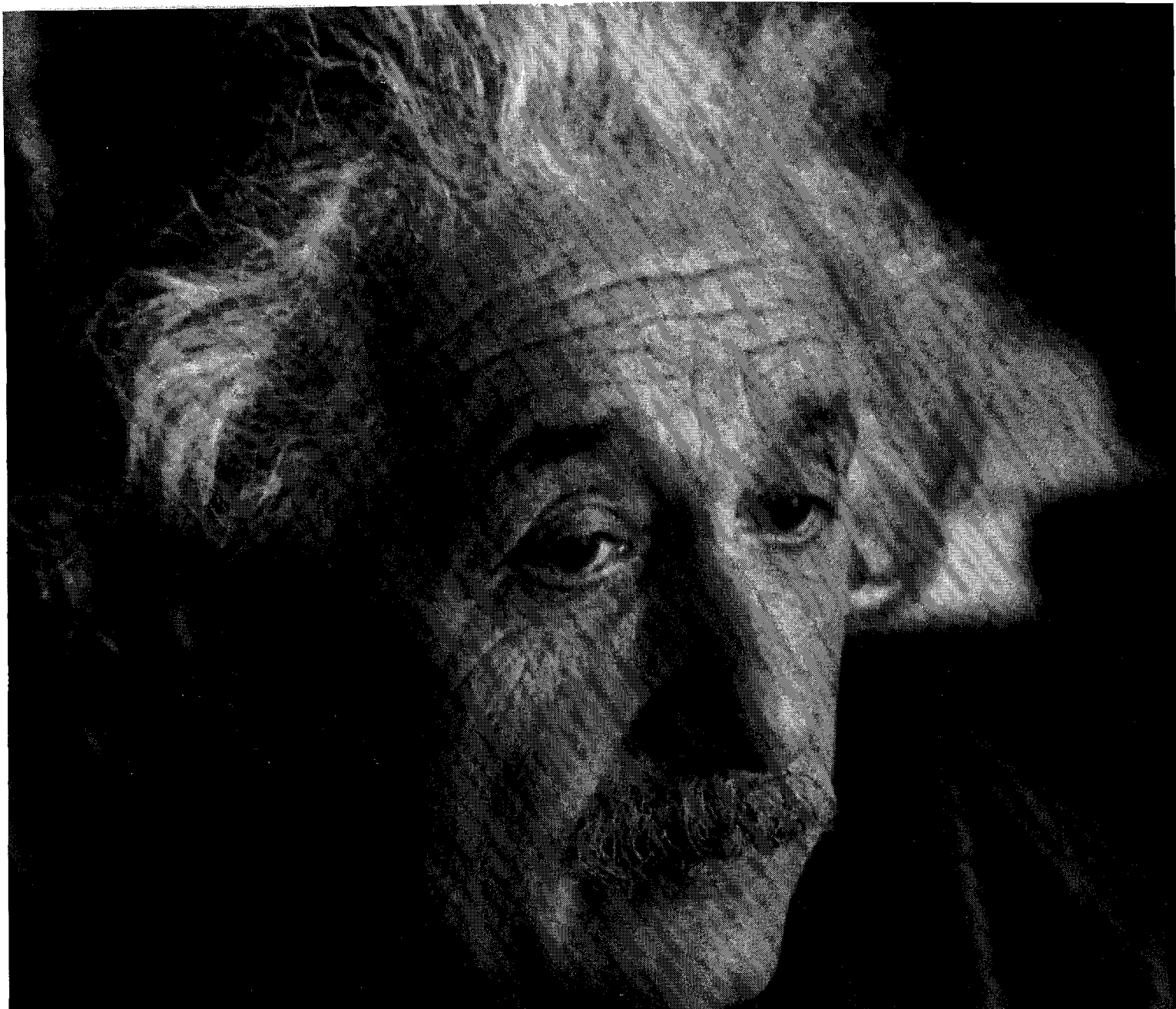
it did not like a proposed increase in trans-Pacific air fare.

Another novelty in economic groupism—aside from the sheer quantity and diversity of the actors—is that the blocs of the 1970s have better tools than their predecessors. Small groups like the Korean orphans lobby gained enormous clout with the passage of the Freedom of Information Act. The credo of open government, one of Jimmy Carter's favorite themes, made it easy to expose the workings of the old lobbies, but also made it possible for the most inexperienced lobbyist to get his hands on inside information and thereby improve his own arm-twisting techniques. The xerox machine, the expansion of electronic communication and the insatiable demand for local news copy have made it easier for groups to recognize a policy issue that may affect them. They are also quicker in organizing for a strategic assault to protect their interests and better able to get attention for the struggle that follows.

The assault is directed quite often at the federal government. This suggests another reason for the growing influence of groupism. Economic blocs have ridden to power on the back of centralized authority. The autoworkers, steelworkers and mineworkers won their place in the economy by forcing the giant industries that employed them to share some of their power. They could not have won the power if the industries had not been there in the first place. These industrial battles were hard and bloody. The more recent battles have been tame by comparison, and the spoils have been handed over to the victorious groups with less resistance.

The fastest growing business and biggest employer in recent years has been government—federal, state and city government. Government's share of the US gross national product has grown from around eight percent in 1929 to around 30 percent in 1970. In relative terms, the money spent by government each year has grown from half the amount spent by business on investment to one and a half times the amount spent on business investment. It makes sense that the fastest-growing unions are those for government workers.

All sorts of hangers-on, including analyzers of government, have profited from the boom. Among the professions, lawyers deserve special mention. Because so many of the economic decisions made by government are written in legal code, lawyers enjoy a privileged place today. Politicians may decide who gets which favors, but the lawyers are responsible for translating the decision into legal language for the record. Long after the politicians have gone on to other things, the lawyers sit around and argue about the meaning of the decision. A talented lawyer can do wonders. He can go in among his fellows and argue that his client is an intended beneficiary of some government decision. If he is persuasive, his translation of the code (granting an economic advantage to his client)



Photo—Lotte Jacobi

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becomes the accepted version. No group that deals with the government can afford to be without one of these translators.

The new inflation of the 1970s is another ingredient in the story. It is both an economic goad that pushes people into self-protective groups and an unwanted by-product of groupism. When inflation rips, as it has in the last decade, the pressure to join an economic league grows stronger. And when these self-help leagues are most successful in winning advantages for their members (as when big unions win 10 percent wage increases during a time of 7 percent inflation), prices will be pushed higher. Groupism feeds and is fed by inflation. As inflation rises, groupism will probably do the same.

If it is true that the economy is breaking into feudal fiefdoms, a couple of conclusions follow. First, anyone who cannot find a place in one of the fortresses of prosperity will suffer great hardship. The privilege gap between the insiders and the outsiders will be large, and it will grow. No one will want to be without a group he can call his own. Holding a claim on economic privilege will be the rule, not the exception.

Second, if this groupism is allowed to grow into full flower and dominate the economy, it will be bad for everyone's welfare, even for those behind the thickest institutional walls. Stagnation will set in. Few people will try to bring innovative projects into the economy, and even fewer will succeed in keeping an innovative project alive long enough for it to grow big, strong and competitive. We might have to rely on General Motors to bring on the invention that eliminates the internal combustion engine, and that might require a very long wait.

An economist at the University of Maryland, Mancur Olson, described in a recent paper how he thinks the process of industrial stagnation might work. Olson argued that one important factor in the different rates of economic productivity between free nations is the presence or absence of narrow interest groups. Countries with many such groups are less productive than those with few groups, or with broad-based groups. "Pressure groups often obtain tariffs," he wrote, "that keep resources in a country from working in the lines in which they have an advantage, or price supports that raise the price of a commodity above its marginal cost to society, or tax loopholes that encourage capital to crowd into activities in which its marginal social product will be unusually low."

The narrow-based groups, Olson wrote, block or delay innovation. Industries may invoke government regulations to thwart the introduction of new, more efficient techniques of production. Labor unions block innovation to protect members' jobs. "The most important way in which common interest organizations reduce the rate of growth," Olson claimed, "is by limiting entry into the industries and occupations they control." When newcomers are

allowed to come in freely, they cause a lot of commotion, and they bring struggle and innovation. When few newcomers are allowed in, then the people in control encounter fewer challenges, and the resources of the economy "go to those whose only distinction is their capacity to collect rents."

Olson argued that interest groups which are small or specialized tend to be more self-centered, while the broad and broadly encompassing ones tend to share some of the larger concerns that trouble society. They feel these concerns deeply enough to mitigate their selfish demands when they conflict with society's demands. Therefore, he concluded, the nations with many specialized economic lobbies have lower rates of growth than those with broad-based groups. The reason that Germany, Japan and Italy have had high rates of growth since World War II is that their narrow interest groups were wiped out by their totalitarian leaders. After the war, the victors encouraged new groups to organize, but the new ones were much broader than those that had existed before. The United States and Britain are among the least productive nations today, according to this theory, because their economies are still dominated by narrow, self-centered interest groups.

Olson's theory is a drastic simplification of what actually happens in the world, and this rendition is a further simplification of the idea. Despite its special focus, the theory has attracted the attention of respected British, German, Japanese and other economists and will probably be around for awhile. It suggests that the economic problem Jimmy Carter confronts is larger than most people suspect.

Eliot Marshall

Eliot Marshall, former TNR senior editor, writes for Science magazine.

Good riddance to Pol Pot, but no
praise for the Vietnamese invasion.

Thanks, But No Thanks

Pol Pot has not been heard from for more than a week now, and with any luck, he never will be again. In less than five years as ruler of Cambodia, this engineering school dropout managed to turn his country into a charnel house and to earn himself a permanent place in the world's all-time hall of infamy. Pol Pot did not have as many lives available to him for destruction as Hitler, Stalin and Mao, but he made himself a monster with what he had. Out of a population of seven million or so,

he and his colleagues in the leadership of Democratic Kampuchea seem to have been responsible for the deaths of more than a million of their own countrymen. Some they executed outright as enemies of their new communist order. They killed not only officials of the old right-wing Lon Nol government, but teachers, merchants, technicians—anyone who might perpetuate bourgeois attitudes. Others died on forced marches from cities to the countryside, where the regime tried to create a pure peasant society. Students of Cambodia's horrors believe most of the victims died of disease and starvation because the Pol Pot government, apparently following the example of the since-discredited "gang of four" in China, set Cambodia on a foreign policy of xenophobic "self-reliance," refusing outside food and medical aid.

Pol Pot not only was a butcher, he was a stupid butcher. With a rag-tag army of 60,000 to 80,000, many of them inexperienced teenagers, Cambodia launched fierce raids into Vietnam, provoking retaliation from that nation's battle-hardened army of 300,000, the world's fifth largest military force. In December 1977, Vietnam conducted deep punitive raids into Cambodia, but the Pol Pot regime still did not get the message. Continued harassment provided a pretext for Vietnam to launch an all-out invasion of Cambodia last month. Vietnamese soldiers made quick work of Cambodia's forces, encircled Phnom Penh, forced Pol Pot to flee and installed a puppet government.

But the world should not be pleased with the method of Pol Pot's riddance. Cambodians aren't, from what we can tell. The country's former ruler, Prince Sihanouk, has condemned Pol Pot's government, but deems it preferable to Vietnamese domination. A former Cambodian diplomat, in an article reprinted in *The New York Times*, likened the transition to being cured of bubonic plague, only to contract cholera. The Carter administration deplored the violation of Cambodia's sovereign territory, and so should we all—not (as *The Washington Post* charged) out of sanctimonious adherence to international law ahead of morality. There are such things as just wars. Perhaps there can be just invasions. But this was not anything of the sort. Vietnam did not take over Cambodia in order to restore civil liberties to that country's people. Vietnam radio proclaims that Cambodia's new government, its puppet, will reopen schools and churches and restore family life. But there is no reason to expect that Vietnam will make conditions of life in Cambodia better than they are in Vietnam. Hundreds of Vietnamese every week are willing to risk drowning at sea to get out of their country. It is hard to believe that Vietnam will make the Cambodians want to stay home.

Historically, in fact, Khmers and Vietnamese regard each other about as Greeks and Turks do. Atrocity stories date back hundreds of years, and continue to the present. When Vietnam last exercised control over Cambodia, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, it

tried to wipe out Cambodian culture—forcing Cambodians to take Vietnamese names, wear Vietnamese clothing and give up their own national customs. Only with the establishment of a French protectorate in 1863 was Cambodia's identity secured. North Vietnam invaded Cambodian territory long before the United States began its incursions and bombings in 1970. It was communist Vietnamese violation of Cambodian territory that led to Lon Nol's seizing power from Sihanouk. Cambodians took the opportunity for a murderous rampage against ethnic Vietnamese within their borders, killing thousands and clogging rivers with the bodies. And then when anti-communist South Vietnamese forces invaded Cambodian territory in 1971, without any US participation or restraint, they returned the favor, raping and pillaging their way through Cambodian villages. With this kind of background, it is doubtful that Vietnamese control over Cambodia will be particularly humane.

Far from waging a war of deliverance, Vietnam has just won a war of imperialism. Perhaps, against the French and the US, the Vietnamese fought a war of national liberation. But since that victory they have not dismantled their army and turned to peaceful development. They have made a botch of development, in fact. Much like their patrons, the Soviets, the Vietnamese have made hegemony their national purpose. The aim of this war against Cambodia was one of plunder and power. Vietnam timed its drive to capture Cambodia's rice crop just before harvest and make up for the woeful shortfalls that floods, forced relocations and socialization of farms have produced in Vietnam. Domination over all Indochina long has been the declared aim of North Vietnam's Communist party, much as it has been the historic aim of Vietnam's rulers. Laos has been under Vietnamese control since 1975, and Cambodia's capture makes the hegemony complete.

Claims may be made in the United States that the supposedly discredited domino theory has been proved correct, after all. Dominoes have fallen, all right, but in a different way from that anticipated by those who got us into Vietnam. When Dean Rusk and others invoked images of a "yellow peril" sweeping through Southeast Asia, it was a Chinese peril they had in mind. But open Chinese-Vietnamese hostility and Sino-American rapprochement now prove that this was an empty peril all along.

Cut off from Indochina as the United States has been since our side's defeat in 1975, our country has had no direct interest in the inter-Communist warfare there.

Coming:
Michael Walzer on
the boat people.

But we do have important indirect interests. Vietnam is now in a position to threaten Thailand, historically a rival for domination of the region. Vietnamese leaders visiting Thailand have promised specifically that Vietnam would not encourage insurgencies in the region, but Vietnam's victory in Cambodia will give it an option to meddle in Thailand if it chooses. The Thais are nervous about the threat, and probably will ask for increased US security assistance when Prime Minister Kriangsak visits Washington in February. The US has been reducing its hardware sales to Thailand over the last three years, but it appears that the Carter administration intends to reverse this trend in response to the Vietnamese aggression.

The administration was even more concerned that China, Cambodia's ally, might feel compelled to take military action against Vietnam, a Soviet client, in response to Vietnam's invasion. Had China done so, US officials feared that the Soviets might respond with military action along the tense Soviet-Chinese border. Who cares whether the Soviets and Chinese go at one another? A State Department official replied: "Who cares if someone shoots the Archduke Ferdinand at Sarajevo? It's dangerous, that's all, particularly in the nuclear age. No one knows where it might spread." Some observers believe the Soviet Union could win a swift and decisive victory that could expose China as a paper tiger, worthless as a counterweight to Soviet ambitions in Asia. Then the United States would have to increase its forces, and Japan would have to rearm, to prevent the Soviets from dominating the area.

The Soviet Union indisputably has scored points against China by backing Vietnam in a victory. China has lost face in being unable to prevent the defeat of its ally. But the two sides have stopped there. China, apparently more intent on modernization than revenge, has pulled back some of its reinforcements from the Vietnamese border and will wait for another day to get even. It is trying to push Cambodia's case in the United Nations, but probably there will be no relief there. If justice prevailed, Vietnam would be denounced as an aggressor at the UN, and its UN development money would be cut off. But the Pol Pot government was so extreme a despotism that it had made itself a pariah even among third world countries, whereas Vietnam still enjoys enduring prestige as a nation that trounced the white man. The United States rightly supported China in seeking a UN hearing for Prince Sihanouk, and made propaganda points against Vietnam and the Soviet Union by offering him high-level attention in Washington.

But there is little that the United States can do—or should do—to reverse Vietnam's victory. The best hope is that a new Cambodian leader will succeed Pol Pot and lead a relentless guerrilla struggle for national independence, and make Cambodia Vietnam's Vietnam.

Morton Kondracke

A standard recipe brings management triumph at *The Washington Star*.

Was Time, Inc., Bluffing?

A. J. Liebling's immortal maxim—"Freedom of the press belongs to the man who owns one"—has a new corollary in labor-management relations. It goes like this. If you already have absolute financial control of a publication, and feel the need to establish absolute control of the people responsible for putting it out, nothing works better than threatening to shut it down. For best results, the boom should be lowered while their union contracts still have many months to run; this catches them off guard.

Time, Inc., has just gone through this exercise at *The Washington Star*, carrying it off so masterfully that 11 veteran unions representing 1267 workers became convinced that the threat was real and succumbed to Time's demands for new "management flexibility," a term which translates into English as "total control of the work force." A federal mediator described the settlement as "a total emasculation job." The unions don't differ with that description. But they plead extenuating circumstances. "Look, it's as though we're in an airplane, and we've got a maniac up front with a hand grenade, and he's ready to pull the pin," said Ronald Rosenberg, a Washington lawyer who negotiated for the printers union at the *Star*.

Time's branch factory in Washington is a 126-year-old afternoon paper which dominated the city's press during its first century. But ever since 1954, when *The Washington Post* bought out the failing *Times-Herald*, the *Star* has been in difficulty. Afternoon papers have become an anachronism. They had their heyday in a time when many blue-collar workers wanted something to read on the trolley going home. They kept on reading in the evening, and their wives looked for the next day's shopping bargains among the advertisements. But Bloomingdale's and Neiman-Marcus don't aim their ads at that kind of trade, and the morning *Post* gets an estimated 85 percent of the capital's newspaper advertising revenue. In Washington, as elsewhere, homeward bound office workers travel mostly by car. They don't read en route, and when they want news in the evening they get it from the television.

A combination of good luck (the advantage of coming out in the morning) and aggressive advertising sales have made the *Post* fat, and Ben Bradlee's legendary editorial skills have made it sassy. Today the *Post* drops heavily on twice as many downtown desks and suburban doorsteps as the *Star*. Against these odds the men and women who write for and edit the *Star* have struggled bravely and with skill. Editorially, it doesn't always hurt to be lean and hungry; at a time when the *Post* occasionally seems to be one belch of smugness and

self-consciousness, the *Star* assembles its news and opinions in a more manageable and often more insightful package. You need only look at most of the rest of the papers in the United States to see how good the *Star* is. Unfortunately, that isn't important to advertisers. The *Star* never regained ground lost to the *Post*, and by 1978 the losses were running at a million dollars a month, with worse things seemingly in store for 1979: projections are that the paper will lose at least \$16 million this year.

Time, Inc., knew all about this hemorrhaging before it decided to buy the *Star* last February. Texas millionaire Joe Albritton had bought the paper in 1974 and pumped millions of dollars into it without stanching the flow. In negotiations during the Albritton era, workers settled for modest wage increases and compromises on work rules (notably a short work week for many Newspaper Guild members). There was a pervasive sense of living on borrowed time, even though Albritton periodically made extravagant claims that the crisis was being brought under control.

Time's appearance on the scene seemed bright with promise. Here was a worthy challenger for the *Post*, a company committed to the idea that the nation's capital should not become a one-paper town. So thought Washingtonians; so, for that matter, said Time.

And at first it seemed that the commitment was genuine and without strings attached. Time hired 23 new reporters and editors for the *Star*, scrambled for advertising and launched a breezy publicity campaign built around the idea that only the *Star* could provide "today's news today." Time also went after the *Post* in the affluent suburban market, beginning publication of five daily suburban sections. (The *Post* has three suburban supplements which appear once a week.) Murray Gart, former *Time* chief of correspondents, was brought in as *Star* editor, and George W. Hoyt, who had successfully handled a string of Chicago suburban papers for Time, took over as publisher.

But these changes alone weren't enough to give the *Star* a fair shot at the *Post*, in the opinion of senior Time, Inc., officialdom. Hoyt talked openly of the need for more "management flexibility." A *Time* executive who didn't want to be quoted for this article said bluntly: "Katie Graham [publisher for the *Post*] socked it to her newspaper unions once and for all in 1975, and we knew we had to do the same thing or go into the 1980s with a lead weight around our necks."

What happened at the *Post* was part of a pattern of disaster for newspaper unions across the country. In city after city, and in several costly strikes—most recently the 88-day fiasco that shut down two out of three of New York's surviving papers last year—the unions have had to give ground. Some major papers, like the Miami *Herald*, now operate on a completely non-union basis, and in other cities such as Kansas City, Omaha and Detroit, the unions are a pale imitation of what they once were.

A common feature of these defeats is the involvement of a Chicago law firm—Seyfarth, Shaw, Fairweather and Geraldson—which has built a national reputation for its ability to help newspaper management get the upper hand. Attorneys working for the firm insist that they are not specialists in union-busting. They say they simply provide management with a wealth of indispensable and often highly technical information about how to get by on less. If a newspaper has been manning a composing room with 20 printers, and wants to get rid of half of them, the boys from Seyfarth, Shaw will figure out how to do it. Sometimes they do the negotiating, too; other times they stay in the back room. This firm represented *The Kansas City Star*, *The New York Times* and the *Detroit Free Press* in bruising victories over newspaper unions. It helped *The Washington Post's* management in 1975. And, not surprisingly, it was on hand when Time began cooking up a strategy to deal with the unions at the *Star* soon after the paper was purchased last year.

Newspaper unions became tough and truculent very early (the history of the Washington printers union begins in 1815) as a necessary response to the coldbloodedness demonstrated by proprietors, who paid starvation wages and slashed payrolls at whim. Until very recently, the unions had firm command of their terrain. But they became musclebound and unimaginative when publishers were suddenly discovering the financial bonanza of automation.

Automation came first to the heavy-duty work of newspapering—with high speed presses and automatic folders, for example—but now it affects both blue-collar and white-collar workers, and more so every day. In a few years copy will be typed on a console by a reporter and moved directly through a computerized page layout system to a computerized press operation. A publisher who agonizes over the torture of actually having to pay money every week to perhaps a thousand people whose services he unhappily requires can look forward to a day—not very far off—when his payroll can be slashed by two-thirds.

Union contracts can be an irksome drag on this process. But Time, Inc., decided not to let this interfere. Although the unions at the *Star* were all working under contracts negotiated with Albritton which were not due to expire until late in 1979, *Star* publisher Hoyt called their representatives together on October 23 and offered them a blunt choice: either we get all those contracts renegotiated by December 31, or we close the doors. Hoyt could and did paint a grim picture of losses which could only be stemmed (in his view) by permitting management the freedom to get rid of dozens of workers who allegedly had been rendered superfluous by automation, and the freedom to freeze or at least chill the wages and benefits of those still needed to get the paper out. The blow would fall hardest on the printers; they were told that 80 of the

183 members of Columbia Typographical Union No. 101 would have to be cleared out by January 1, even though many of these employees had contracts guaranteeing them lifetime jobs. And Hoyt wanted the freedom to slash the printers' payroll again later. He also wanted all the unions to agree to five-year contracts full of fine print protecting management against any strikes and allowing management new liberties that would be explained vaguely or not at all. In return, Hoyt said Time would pledge \$60 million over five years to keep the *Star* alive and to help it do battle with the *Post*.

The union negotiators never really got together. Reactions to Hoyt's ultimatum varied. The Newspaper Guild, which represents 486 men and women at the *Star*, and the Teamsters, with 369 *Star* workers, decided that Hoyt and Time weren't bluffing. Between them, they represented two-thirds of the workers at the *Star*, and management sources say that Time knew they would capitulate within a few days after Hoyt's meeting. The printers and the pressmen came to the opposite conclusion and hoped that they could call Time's bluff.

Even standing shoulder to shoulder, the 11 *Star* unions would not necessarily have forced Shepley *et al* to retreat. The printers nevertheless deserve the Light Brigade trophy for trying. On the eve of the deadline, they went into federal court seeking a temporary injunction against closure of the *Star* on the grounds that Time had contractual commitments into 1979 that it had to honor. Legally, they had a thin argument. But their case was assigned to a federal district judge, Charles R. Richey, who surprised Time's lawyers by ignoring legal niceties in favor of the simple argument that everything possible should be done to make sure that press competition would be preserved in Washington. Richey, a sometime crony of Spiro Agnew appointed in 1971 by Richard Nixon, may simply have been aghast at the time that the newspaper of Watergate would ever have the field to itself. But he made great copy and reporters instantly elevated him to near sainthood in their dispatches from the courthouse.

Time's lawyers checkmated Richey by announcing that they were preparing bankruptcy papers for the *Star*. This last move, although it might eventually have been challenged successfully (if the *Star* is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Time, how can it be truly bankrupt?), would at the least have led to lengthy litigation, and meanwhile 1267 *Star* employees would have been sluiced into the unemployment pool. Faced with that prospect, the printers and pressmen capitulated, saving a little face by announcing that at the last moment Hoyt had backed away from some of management's more outrageous demands. (For example, the 80 printers who are to be sacrificed—with \$40,000 "buyouts" that will amount to an average of \$27,500 after taxes—do not have to offer themselves to the guillotine in January; they have until June.

In the last-minute maneuvering, the *Star* went under for just one day; it was back in business on January 2, and Washington awoke to find that it was still among the select 35 American cities where papers still compete fully against each other. (In 21 other communities, competing papers share printing plants and, sometimes, advertising staffs.

The ballyhoo about Time's commitment to pour \$60 million into the *Star* over five years overlooked the fact that this transfusion comes to one million dollars a month—less than the *Star* is now losing. In a couple of years, might Time think again about its "commitment?" If it did, what would stand in the way of a bail-out, given the available evidence about what Time thinks of the sanctity of contracts?

Contracts covering more than half the *Post's* employees are up for renewal this year. Publisher Katharine Graham is already on record as saying she's determined to cut her printing and pressroom staff—already slashed since 1975—by another two-thirds. Today, *Post* reporters may feel far removed from the grunts on the lower floors. Tomorrow, a gaggle of transistors and diodes could change all that, for some of them at least. When attrition is inevitable, the question for negotiations is how to minimize the pain. Without unity, unions can expect to endure agony. One federal mediator said last week, "I don't think you'll see any newspaper strikes in this town for a long time. And if you do, you won't see them succeed."

Thomas N. Bethell

Thomas N. Bethell is a freelance reporter and former research director of the United Mine Workers. He is not the same Tom Bethell who writes for *Harper's*.

Royal pretenders around the world ache for the shah.

Deposing a King

Marxists will cite its historical inevitability, pious Moslems will call it God's will. Others may quote the poet of old Persia, Omar Khayyam, who spoke of the Moving Finger that "writes, and having writ, moves on: nor all your piety nor wit lure it back to cancel half a line, nor all your tears wash out a word of it."

The three factions now united against the shah of Iran may never agree on the cause of his downfall, and some of their debates will doubtless conclude in prison. It takes a dreamer to imagine a new dawn for human rights in a post-shah Iran—whether the country will be

ruled by Marxists marching forever forward, by Moslems bent on canceling the 20th century or by the pure in heart who are likely to be crushed first.

The shah is unbeloved. He has erred, his family has stolen, his army has slain. He has no redoubt to retreat into. No tribe, regiment or party apparatus can be relied upon to save him and to suppress the rest of the nation. Suddenly his time is up. His good deeds are forgotten. The king of kings must go.

No outsider can convince Iranian revolutionaries of the folly of trading a defensively repressive paternalism for an aggressively paranoid totalitarianism. It's like trying to talk Eve out of eating that apple. Disappointment will come once more. The temptation is irresistible. Deposing a king is high drama, and the measure of exultation the righteous are entitled to feel rises in direct proportion to the power the king arrogated.

Regret, remorse and reconsideration will come much later. But revisionism and nostalgia are not potent political forces, and monarchism these days is a mood rather than a movement. One may convince any number of Czechs and Hungarians, Croatians and Austrians how much more tolerant Franz Josef was than his heirs, and how much better the Hapsburg Empire fared than any of its successor states. Or one may easily prove that conditions in courts, jails and villages of exile were more humane under the czar than under Stalin or Brezhnev. But the argument favoring the decadent caprice of monarchy over the scientific cruelty of socialism is good only for a postprandial hypothesis or the idle chatter of poetry.

In this century, a king is a creature of the past, an exile in time. He belongs with knights in shining armor and damsels in distress—if not with fauns and naiads.

Europe has had its regicides, but the institution of kingship survives. Ten viable monarchies remain—from the showcase royalty of Great Britain to the obscure principality of Liechtenstein, from middle-class sovereigns in social-democratic Scandinavia to the protagonist of democracy in post-fascist Spain. The third world, meanwhile, is going through its revolutions of 1649, 1789 and 1917 *now*. In the past two decades, monarchs were deposed in Laos, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Libya, Yemen, Zanzibar and Iraq; and the kings of Jordan and Morocco have lived through a series of assassination attempts. Asia has 12 functioning monarchies: Bahrain, Bhutan, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Nepal, Oman, Qatar, Saudia Arabia, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates and Malaysia. In Africa, Lesotho is ruled by a tribal king, Morocco's king is a descendant of the Prophet Mohammed and in 1976 an army chief-of-staff declared himself emperor of Central Africa.

In Europe's exclusive club of non-reigning royalty, there is great concern about the shah. He has been kind and gracious to them—unlike Queen Elizabeth of England, for instance, who has upheld the family tradition of aloofness from defunct royalty, many of

them her cousins. From Leka I, king of the Albanians, to Henri Bourbon-Orleans, count of Paris, and from Portugal's Dom Duarte to Russia's Grand Duke Wladimir, claimants to European thrones that no longer exist recognize that a bell tolling for one king tolls for all. That the shah is mere second-generation royalty does not reduce their sympathy for him. A king is a king is a king, and there are fewer and fewer of them on thrones. And just as the coronation of Juan Carlos in Spain raised royalist expectations everywhere in Europe, the fall of the most powerful post-World War II monarch diminishes hopes of restoration—hopes that no royal pretender surrenders until his dying day.

When a monarchy is gone, and the crowned head rests on the sandy ground of the executioner's pit or on a Cote d'Azur beach, there is a sudden emptiness, an eerie silence. But the void is soon filled with new lies, cheap bombast and the clamor of scheming, blundering politicians from whom only a strong man can deliver the nation: a chairman of a new revolution, a low-born despot, an ersatz king.

Charles Fenyvesi

Charles Fenyvesi is writing a book on non-reigning royalty.

Taiwan after the fall, and Peking's plans to save world capitalism.

All the Peanuts in China

Taipei

Everyone tried to be civilized, the break-up was long expected, but there was still some bitterness at the end. "CARTER SELLS PEANUTS, ALSO FRIENDS" said a placard waved by university students at Taipei airport. A taxi driver doused himself with blazing gasoline. The demonstrators followed up their reproachful message with a barrage of stones, eggs, tomatoes and peanuts that shattered the windscreen of the US embassy's Plymouth, gashed the cheek of State Department emissary Warren Christopher and broke the wraparound eyeglasses of Leonard Unger, the last American ambassador to the Republic of China.

At dusk on New Year's Eve, two marines lowered Old Glory for the last time outside the unpretentious US embassy, watched by a knot of children on skateboards. Later they linked arms at the quiet embassy party for the traditional "Should auld acquaintance be forgot." In the foothills northeast of Taipei a lone soldier stood bamboo-straight by the black marble sarcophagus

where Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek rests "temporarily," until he can be buried in state in Nanking when the Nationalists resume power on the mainland.

But now the Gimo will have to make it without American help. Over in Peiping, as we spell it here, champagne corks were popping in the new US embassy. It would be tasteless, perhaps, at this festive season to recall the preamble of the 1954 treaty between the US and the Republic of China, "... these arrangements provide the essential framework for the defense of the free peoples of the Western Pacific against Communist aggression," the ringing pledge of Article Ten, "this Treaty shall remain in force indefinitely," or the discreet escape clause (John Foster Dulles, we might recall, was a lawyer), "either Party may terminate it one year after notice has been given to the other Party."

The notice has been given, and the Parties are through. Meanwhile the Peiping rebels have announced that they, too, are going to use their first legal opportunity, in this year of grace 1979, to denounce *their* treaty of fraternal alliance and socialist cooperation with the Soviet Union. Off with the old, on with the new.

The US has by no means chosen the cruelest way to drop off the key in Taiwan. Enough American-made tanks, aircraft and short-range missiles have been delivered or promised to make the island one of the least inviting invasion targets in the world. Conforming, not a minute too soon, to the ways of the Orient, the old US embassy soon will reopen for consular, commercial and cultural business as something called the "Asian American Services Corporation."

The Hilton, the Chase Manhattan and Coca-Cola all will continue to be reassuringly present. (Coke, with outlets all over Taiwan and a new plant announced for Shanghai, is pioneering a two-Chinas trade policy with fizzling possibilities for everyone.) Robert Parker, president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Taipei, said the decent thing: "I think my government has made a tragic mistake in breaking relations with a friendly country for the first time in US history." Zenith and Ford were among the US firms that rallied round and announced increased investments in Taiwan after the break. Laws permitting 100 percent repatriation of profits will continue to attract US and other foreign investors. The US, I was told, even plans to continue shipments of enriched uranium for Taiwan's three reactors, under the same informal American inspection that began after Taiwan was expelled from the United Nations in 1971. Barring political blunders (less possible with each new derecognition), Taiwan—already second only to Japan in per-capita GNP—should be one of the tough Asian medium-technology countries which will have made most industrial jobs in Europe and the US redundant by the end of the century.

Even then, very likely, Taiwan will still be claiming to

be the rightful government of China. Of Taiwan's 17 million people, the two million who came (many in diapers) from the mainland hold almost all the positions of power, and their claim to boss Taiwan depends on their claim to rule China. The university students and taxi drivers, for instance, who showered Jimmy Carter's emissary with symbolic peanuts are from two classes made up mostly of mainlanders and their sons and daughters.

A new generation, mainland-descended, is now coming into power, headed by the Gimo's son, the capable President Chiang Ching-kuo. They are more than likely to keep asserting the claim, without even the support of the foreign worthies that still remain in its camp in 1979, such as Prince Fawwaz, governor of Mecca and chairman of the Saudi Supreme Pilgrimage Council ("We will never deal with any atheistic Communist regime"). One of the Taiwan government's first moves after derecognition was to postpone the forthcoming elections indefinitely, suggesting that the fabled stability of the island's government has a solid future.

The US China "initiative" is really a return to a very old policy. American attempts to dump the Kuomintang go back at least to the autumn of 1944, when the military incompetence of the Gimo, the poor motivation of his troops and the cowardice and corruption of his generals had lost all East China to the last and most successful of the Japanese offensives. Franklin Roosevelt sent a blunt message practically ordering Chiang to hand over field command to the American General "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell.

The message was delivered by Stilwell in person. "I handed this bundle of paprika to the Peanut and then sank back with a sigh," Stilwell noted in his diary. Stilwell called Chiang "the Peanut" as a comment on his military acumen. "The harpoon hit the little bugger right in the solar plexus, and went right through him. It was a clean hit, but beyond turning green and losing the power of speech, he did not bat an eye. . . . I came home. Pretty sight crossing the river: lights all on in Chungking."

The lights soon went off again. Stilwell overlooked Chiang's political cunning. Chiang managed to get Roosevelt to fire Stilwell instead, the Japanese took a quarter of a million Chinese prisoners, and the communist guerrillas began to flourish in the huge areas the Japanese overran.

Then, in November 1944, Pat Hurley from Oklahoma arrived to negotiate a coalition between Chinese Communists and Nationalists, as future allies of the United States. A veteran of delicate oil negotiations in Mexico, Hurley believed that Mao and Chou En-lai, as macho revolutionaries, would respond to the kind of cigar-chomping bonhomie appropriate to Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata. In the bleak mountains of Yen-an he got nowhere. The first Marshall Plan was an attempt by General Marshall, after the Japanese

had been defeated, to bring the Communists into the Chinese government. It, too, failed.

China—the real China—always has fascinated Americans: the broad land, the huge market, the diligent, ancient race which is among America's own best respected minorities. China was intended all along to be America's postwar partner, welcoming American investors, containing both the Russians from expanding the last European empire left in Asia and the over-achieving Japanese from repeating their naval and commercial challenge of the 1930s. Then the Chinese apparently went over to the Russians themselves, and the North Koreans soon joined the plot. A kind of substitute China was hastily cobbled together from South Korea, Japan, the defeated Kuomintang rump on Taiwan and South Vietnam—the Dulles "arrangements" of which the now inoperative treaty with Taiwan speaks in such confident tones.

These arrangements had many consequences, as diverse as the Vietnam War and last year's Japanese trade surplus with the US of \$13 billion. All of them were disagreeable, from the US viewpoint, and after all this history the Pancho Villas of Yenan are still the only people in the Far East who are containing any Russians.

The logic of recognizing the real China, and maybe something warmer than just recognition, has been clear ever since Henry Kissinger held his two-man seminar with Chou En-lai in 1971. The Chinese hate Russians, they have a large army, they are not trying to spread revolutionary communism (they even seem to be having second thoughts about practicing it themselves), and they are not stopping anyone from emigrating to Israel. What's been the hold-up? That's an old story. But why are the corks finally popping in Peiping in January 1979?

There are some modest clues in Taipei, and more in Tokyo. Last August China and Japan signed their Peace and Friendship Treaty, by which the Japanese, according to the Soviet Union, joined China's anti-hegemony front. In the next month visitors to-and-froing between Japan and China heard talk of astounding deals under discussion: nuclear reactors from the French, coal-mining machinery from the Germans, a billion-dollar order for jet fighters from Britain, all in the works and ready to go. The fabulous riches of far-off Cathay, for which men left wives and families, clergymen sold opium and sailors braved scurvy and typhoon, were once again opening up.

But the big winners, as of September last, were going to be the Japanese who had just signed the ambiguous treaty. Yoshihiro Inayama, chairman of Nippon Steel, in China for the groundbreaking of a billion-dollar steel plant his firm is building near Shanghai, heard that the Chinese were thinking of 10 more such steel mills—all made of steel, an order worth uncountable millions of yen! But one country was not mentioned as in line for any of these megadeals—the United States. Relations not normal, explained various Chinese officials.

Taiwan problem. American technology greatly admired in the new, businesslike China. What a pity.

Early last October Harvey Feldman, in charge of the Taiwan desk in Washington, visited Taipei and had long serious talks with Ambassador Unger and sundry American businessmen. The same month the US forces radio station on Taiwan, which has been buying news from the Associated Press on a yearly contract since 1955, changed to a three-month contract, which expired on December 31, 1978, the day the radio closed down for keeps. The next day the US was free, at last, to join the China rush.

Hard details on the Chinese proposals for revitalizing world capitalism are still sparse. One deal made semi-public is for a \$200-million joint venture between the Japanese Sanyo Electric Group and the municipalities of Shanghai and Peking. The Japanese will own 49 percent for 10 to 15 years. In exchange for this, they are expected to put up all the money, machinery and technology for manufacturing refrigerators right away. The Chinese contribute land and labor, commodities they have in good supply. Until they are nationalized, the Japanese will collect their dividends in refrigerators, which they can sell at home, to the Eskimos or anywhere in the world they can find a trade barrier lowered for an instant.

Another deal calls for the Chinese to buy three million tons of iron ore a year from Australia for the new Shanghai plant, to be paid for with exports to Australia of textiles, chinaware, light manufactures and domestic equipment such as TV sets and refrigerators. Australians, especially textile and refrigerator makers, are wondering.

China's concept of people's capitalism, it seems, depends on foreigners putting up the money and running the risks, although China is debt-free and could borrow from any bank in the world. (Perhaps Moscow Narodny might take a bit of cajoling.) Not for nothing are the Chinese regarded as the world's most gifted traders.

But if payment in consumer items, and the specter of a super-Japan let loose on the world, seem unattractive, then perhaps China can pay in kind. Oil there is, 30 billion barrels (reported by the Chinese), but China's own demand will presumably soar insatiably if these industrial schemes come off. Wheat, cotton, soybeans are all there but China is a major importer already, and crops fluctuate alarmingly. Jade and jewelry, embroidered rugs, plastic chopsticks, feathers and duck-down . . . Hmmm.

Oh, here's something. Peanuts. China has a large, exportable surplus of high-grade peanuts. When Jimmy Carter goes to Peking they'll probably shower him with peanuts, as a token of gratitude and friendship.

Murray Sayle

Murray Sayle writes from the Far East for the *New Statesmen* and other British publications.

Arts and Lives

Stanley Kauffmann on films

Japanese Master

If the name of Kenji Mizoguchi is not a household word in America, so much the worse for American households. This splendid artist (1898-1956) began his directing career in 1922 and made between 90 and 100 films, only a handful of which are known in the US. (Most of his silent films have disappeared completely.) But in that handful are such gems as *Ugetsu*, *Sansho the Bailiff*, and *The Life of Oharu*. For Americans, most of Mizoguchi's available work might as well be hanging somewhere in outer space. In fact, if a trifling sliver of the funds allotted by government to exploring sterile space were used to bring us the work of artists in other parts of our own planet, the results might be a lot more beneficial, immediately and possibly in the long run.

In 1978 the Film Forum—and thanks again to them—gave the New York premiere of *A Geisha* (1953) by Mizoguchi. Now New Yorker Films, one of the few US companies constantly concerned with intraplanetary communication, brings us a 1949 Mizoguchi, gawkily entitled *My Love Has Been Burning*. Several books suggest that this is the literal meaning of the original title: I suppose that, to resurrect a phrase, it loses in translation.

Mizoguchi is noted for, among other virtues, his passionate, humane concern with women, their social place, exploitation, powers, grievances and beauties. (His last film, *Street of Shame*, was one of several about prostitutes.) *My Love* is about women's struggle for equality in the 1880s. The original story was by Kogo Noda, known for his long and blessed collaboration with Yasujiro Ozu. (*Tokyo Story*, for a supreme instance.) From Noda's story a screenplay was written by Yoshikata Yoda, who worked with Mizoguchi for decades, and by Kaneto Shindo, then chief assistant to Mizoguchi, who went on to make such films of his own as *The Island* and *Onibaba*. (Shindo's first feature, made in 1951,

was autobiographical, dealing with a screenwriter and a venerated director, the latter a portrait of Mizoguchi.)

My Love has a central figure, Eiko, daughter of an upper-class family in Okayama, but the story is really double—about Eiko and about Chiyo, a maid in Eiko's household who is sold by her poor parents to a factory in Tokyo. Eiko tries to stop this sale, but her father rebukes her for not knowing a woman's place and for not understanding how a working-class girl must help her parents. Eiko then goes to Tokyo herself, to work with the Liberal party toward a new constitution and women's rights; lives with a young Liberal leader; goes to prison (graphic sequences) as a result of a fire in the factory where Chiyo has been indentured, a fire that Chiyo herself set after being whipped and raped. An amnesty is declared, and Eiko returns to her lover. They take in the homeless Chiyo. Then Eiko discovers that her lover is also sleeping with Chiyo, and she leaves. She goes back to Okayama to start a school for girls. On the train she hears of her lover's electoral triumph—as a Liberal reformer. And on the train she is joined by Chiyo. The two young women, who left for Tokyo on different paths, are returning home on the same path.

No underscoring of the symmetries of the story, of its historical relevance and still-pertinent truths, can elevate the script into much more than a skillful armature designed to exhibit some data and some theses. In lesser hands the script would be a good polemic. In Mizoguchi's hands it becomes a golden example of transformation by style. Through his miraculous direction, the "messages" of the film are both dramatized and superseded. He serves the material—he chose it because he wanted to serve it—yet his art makes the film itself paramount. And there's a paradoxical reward: by making the film itself the real subject, Mizoguchi serves

the social concerns of the script in the most profound way. Napoleon said that he heard the approach of the Revolution's tumbrils in Beaumarchais's *The Marriage of Figaro*. I don't know whether Napoleon ever heard the opera that Mozart made from the play, but if he did, he heard the tumbrils again, plus something much greater than Beaumarchais which, in turn, made the tumbrils themselves resound more clearly.

John Gillett says of Mizoguchi:

He was continually exploring, refining and developing a cinematic language of which he alone held the key. He knew the secret of communicating through the camera So that as the husband returns home, in Ugetsu, to find his dead wife apparently waiting for him, it is the slow panning camera movement which magically tells us that she is, in fact, a visitor from the spirit world.

It is rude and crude to snip moments from a good work. The best example of a Mizoguchi film is, obviously but also ultimately, a Mizoguchi film. Still, in the commerce of criticism, instances can be helpful, and here are some moments from *My Love*. In Eiko's home, near the beginning, the camera is fixed far from the door while she and her mother wait for her father to return; he enters and walks toward us, almost to the camera, then they speak to him. The camera has been in *his position in the household*, waiting for him to come home and assume it. In Okayama, early in the film, the camera dollies from left to right several times in exterior shots, following various characters. I wondered why the dollying

Films Worth Seeing

Autumn Sonata. Ingrid Bergman and Liv Ullmann as mother and daughter, directed by Ingmar Bergman. Still top of the list in every sense.

Comes a Horseman. A muddled "mod" Western, poor but recommended for Jane Fonda's performance, her best in years, as a stubborn lone rancher.

Superman. Oh, well, why not? Christopher Reeve is amiable as the Big S, and there's lots of stuff.

The Wiz. Another "why not?" Diana Ross is unbearable, but the rest of the cast is good, and the screen is loaded with expensive trappings.

SK

was always in that direction until the last of those movements took us to the dock where people were waiting for the Tokyo ferry. The basic motion of that whole opening sequence had been toward departure, the point of departure. Later, when two people tussle physically, they move off-camera; then a screen topples and lies diagonally across the camera's field of vision, the fracture of our view becoming itself a fracture of normality. Yet when Mizoguchi must show violence, he does it severely. When the factory guards punish disobedient girls, hanging them up bound or whipping them on the floor, Mizoguchi views it from one of his most telling angles, high but not remote, making every dram of the horror rise toward us like a stench. At the other extreme, gentle symbolism, is the last sequence in the smoky train. After Eiko hears someone read from a newspaper about the Liberal election triumph, she pulls her white shawl around herself. It's just a shawl and it's not treated grandly, but its very whiteness in that shot is startling, and the action can be read as the donning of a sacerdotal vocation. This effect is due in part to the camera of Kohei Sugiyama, who made earlier and later films with Mizoguchi and whose gradations in this black-and-white film are delicate.

I recognized some of the actors in the sterling cast. Kinuyo Tanaka, the Eiko, played the title role in *The Life of Oharu*. She and Mitsuko Mito, the Chiyo, were the two wives in *Ugetsu*. (Tanaka was also the first Japanese woman to direct a film—in 1953.) Ichiro Sugai, the Liberal leader, was in *Oharu* and other Mizoguchi films. Sugai has the most complex role here because it's the most contradictory: a man who is fighting publicly for reforms yet who in his private life finds himself strapped by old patterns.

One curious point: Commodore Perry first reached Japan in 1853, yet only 30 years later Western clothes were fashionable, part-time at least, and hotels had tea-dancing—waltzes!

It's strange to read that, when *My Love* first appeared in Japan, it was criticized as a "wild animal film" and that subsequently Mizoguchi himself called it "barbarous." He said:

I was stimulated by the pictures Picasso made just after the war. I wanted . . . to grapple with themes hand to hand. . . . I realize now . . . that it is necessary to retain sufficient self-possession to be able to create an evocative but objective description.

First reaction: If *My Love* is not "self-

possessed" from first moment to last, the term has no meaning. Second, although Mizoguchi went on to the ethereality of *Ugetsu*, he also went on to the harshness of *Sansho*. What's interesting about the quotation is the rigor of his self-criticism so late in his career. Speaking of his continuing quest for the right style for each circumstance,

he said: "In this sense a filmmaker never stops being young."

Neither do such a filmmaker's films. This 30-year-old film is more alive, more secure and appealing in its life, than almost all the new films of the past year. If *My Love* is not first-rank Mizoguchi, it's still good enough, and to spare, for mere mortals.

Books Considered

Woman's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices, 1870 to the Present by Sheila Rothman

(Basic Books; \$12.50)

Recent writing on women's history in this country has been deeply engaged with the feminist movement, and this cross-fertilization has predictably proven both invigorating and debilitating. Increasing numbers of American women have discovered that they have a past, that knowledge of this past has been kept from them, and that precisely such induced collective amnesia is a standard result of group oppression. The broader dissemination and reinterpretation of historical knowledge about women was one of the more important developments of the late 1960s. Inevitably, the tone of early feminist studies was one of aggressive discovery; it usually celebrated women who had been forgotten and often condemned the men who had consigned them to insignificance, oblivion or disgrace. This imperialistic phase of women's studies, which I regard as the creation of intellectual personal property by a hitherto propertyless group, was necessary, but, as an exclusive concern, short-lived, ending in the early and mid-1970s.

That women have suffered at men's hands in important ways can hardly be disputed, but the critical historical question now is increasingly one of analysis and evaluation. If, as I believe, American women at several junctures over the last centuries gained and enjoyed important rights only to neglect or lose them, how should masculine and

feminine responsibility for this pattern be assigned? Given that today's feminist writers are working, whether they will or not, in a political movement, to what degree should political considerations enter into the question of analysis? One of the most debilitating tactics traditionally used to sabotage women has been to attack feminine morale by tallying the failures of feminist history; you never have done it well, the argument runs, so why try now? To acknowledge past failures and yet strengthen present purpose is thus a practical necessity. It is to this task that Sheila Rothman addresses herself. Her new book, *Woman's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices, 1870 to the Present*, is a sustained, comprehensive and successful effort to fulfill the interlocking obligations of feminist scholarship and a richly pragmatic conscience.

Caveats first, if only to clear the field. Rothman's book is inaccurately titled and inadequately introduced. *Woman's Proper Place* suggests that we will be asked to follow a debate over the nature and function of the feminine; such a debate is hardly central to Rothman's discussion. The words *A History* in the subtitle promise that this will be an inclusive, historically-minded narrative—but it is not. Rothman's sense of historical placing itself is sometimes weak; for example, she locates in the late 19th century attitudes which had their

origins and widest circulation in an earlier period. More important are her puzzling valuations of historical phenomena. She devotes only five consecutive pages to the suffrage struggle, and allots scarcely greater coverage to the Depression and World War II—both formidable influences in American women's history—labeling them at one point "interruptions." And, after a fine discussion of the development of the big city department store at the start of the book, it is disappointing to find that Rothman gives no attention to woman as consumer, surely one of her most important socioeconomic roles. Nor does she try to analyze the role of advertising, which I would define as the attempted extension of what business forces believed and determined feminine "ideal and practices" to be. And Rothman sidesteps the many-pronged consumer movement in which more women were involved than in any modern cause except the suffrage and temperance struggles. Finally, she does not enunciate with sufficient clarity the theme which dictated and justified such drastic expansions and contractions of attention.

In her introduction, Rothman divides her material into four periods of "ideal" and "policy," which succeed each other in rough chronological order: the ideal of "virtuous womanhood" of the post-Civil War decades, guiding middle-class feminine reformers to form clubs and associate in philanthropic activity against the evil effects of urban life on their sex; the Progressive ideal of "educated womanhood" dominant in the early 20th century, which stressed training for womanly tasks and dictated attempts to establish and fortify new institutions, ranging from the kindergarten to the settlement house, as part of intelligent pressure for legislative reform; the concept of "wife-companion" of the 1920s, expressive of a reprivatization, depoliticization and resexualization of the womanly role; and finally the ideal current in our own day of "woman as person," determined to put her needs and self-fulfillment before her traditionally defined responsibilities to family and society.

This schema explains Rothman's organization of her material, but it does not fully define her selection and interpretation of it. For there is a pattern to *Woman's Proper Place*, both more sharply focused and more reverberant than either the title or the introduction suggests. While covering a wide range of material with striking acumen and



A visiting nurse climbs over tenement roofs to reach her patient.

To Be a Woman in America, 1850-1930 by Annette K. Baxter with Constance Jacobs

(Times Books; \$14.95)

The women photographed in this book are often lifting their skirts—simply in order to move. Constance Jacobs has searched through the collections of universities, museums, archives and historical societies across the US for pictures as close to candid action shots and as far from posed portraits as she could find. The commentary by Annette K. Baxter is not really needed; the photographs of women growing up, working, relaxing, trying out new roles speak for themselves—of lives more vital and various than we might have expected women to lead between 1850 and 1930.

fairmindedness, Rothman is at her most thorough and penetrating in dealing with the movements that involved middle-class women in the problems of their lower-class sisters. The "virtuous women" of the late 19th century organized updated Magdalene societies and working girls' clubs with mottoes like "The Three Ps—Purity, Perseverance, and Pleasantness." The Progressives moved boldly into the slum, hoping both to find, in the words of Vide Scudder, a veteran of Hull House, "the reality I was always seeking," and to bring comprehensive protective legislation to its aid. Even the "wife-companion" of the 1920s to whom Rothman grants little attention cannot totally evade the class issue; for, as I see

it, her most flamboyant incarnation, the "flapper," apolitical as she notoriously was, tacitly located her *desideratum*, style, in her ability to appropriate lower-class talk and mores for the purpose of shocking bourgeois sensibilities. Arriving at our contemporary "woman as person," Rothman shows adroitly how the blue jeans she dons and the problems she faces—ERA, abortion, divorce and child care—involve her in working-class issues, ill-equipped as she, like her predecessors, may be to do them full justice. Although Rothman devotes considerable space to the higher education of women, largely a middle-class affair from start to finish, even here the reader must remember that the impulse in question was missionary; the literate to

the rescue of the illiterate of their sex. It is transcultural, and usually trans-class, reform which absorbs Rothman, reform perpetrated by one class theoretically as much for the benefit of another class as for its own.

It follows that Rothman is best on urban-centered reform, which almost by definition cuts across class lines. The ideals of Rothman's reformers may be drawn from rural backgrounds or precepts, their desire might be to de-urbanize the female city toiler and to propagate country values; nonetheless, it is the city with its m  le of classes and its hordes of immigrants that they took as their problem—and their competitor. In one of the most resonant sentences in the book, Rothman explains why working class girls rarely joined the clubs and societies their social superiors offered them as a means of uplift: "The grim reality of life on the city streets seemed preferable to the helping hand of middle-class women reformers." The city provided these reformers, as it has others, with a metaphor and a laboratory for the modern world which they wished to humanize and from which they had to learn.

In Rothman's view, the middle-class American woman's central task and her principal hope of genuine betterment after 1870 lay in facing and responding to the class differences found among her sex in industrial America. Actuated by the belief that honesty may "inform" rather than "inhibit" action, and that "awareness" is "the beginning of wisdom," Rothman expresses her considered judgment that the American feminists and reformers she studies have failed in this task: "The bonds of sex have not been able to overcome the differences between classes." Women reformers have aided the middle-class members of their sex, not its working and lower-class representatives. The questions Rothman as social theorist has set herself are how and why this happened.

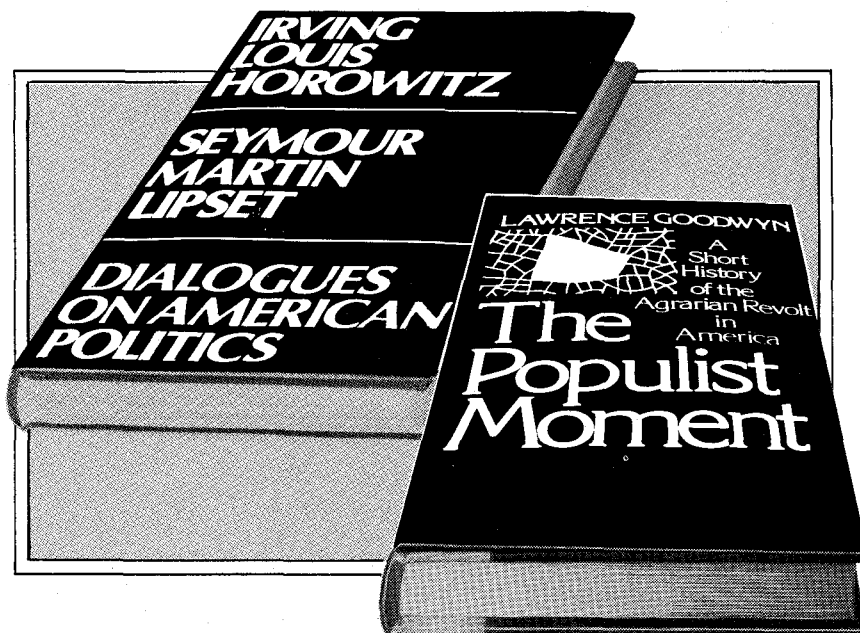
I will first put the answer in its simplest terms. Rothman's reformers found readiest backing, both from within and without, for their most conservative ideas. To elaborate. Rothman is nowhere more thorough, more capaciously just and discerning, than in her discussion of the ongoing process by which male professionals took over nascently professionalized aspects of woman's impulses toward reform, upward mobility and modernization. I might call this sociological

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process, so skillfully elaborated in *Woman's Proper Place*, Rothman's law. It applies to reform action, and also, although Rothman does not fully bring this out, to reform rationalization and articulation on the part of women. Whether she is dealing with the Sheppard-Towner Act of 1921, designed to spread enlightened child care and medical service through the administrative work of Progressive women, or with Margaret Sanger's efforts, in the name of free speech, liberated sexuality and social justice, to propagate birth control information, Rothman brilliantly documents the ironic fact that when women try to extend and professionalize their roles they make those roles attractive—and threatening—to male professionals. And it is far easier for male experts to extend their already powerful professional networks to encompass the "problems" of pregnancy and child care, for example, than it is for untrained, uncertified women to retain control over these concerns, even though they themselves have defined them as problems.

Let me, following Rothman's striking analysis, pursue the medical aspect of the pattern. Woman's particular experience, from the Victorian period down to our own day, has allowed her to focus on preventive medicine rather than on crisis-oriented treatment. Hindered in appropriating official (masculine) medical theory, she spotted what theory omitted: maintenance care. But feminine awareness too often serves as a flag planted in new territory by an explorer; it is the country that in a sense owns the discoverer, not the discoverer herself, that settles the place. By the late 1920s, the AMA had taken preventive treatment as a top priority, and employed a "vicious" smear campaign to discredit its feminine originators. Where women wished to lead, they ended by following; trying to become doctors, they became nurses. The unwritten rule, Rothman makes us see, is that woman to date has usually improved her lot as much, if not more, to man's advantage as to her own; her self-improvement has translated into new material for male expertise. To modernize is in part to masculinize, not in the usual pejorative sense of aping male ways that critics of feminism have long employed, but in the more profound sense of playing into male hands.

This hypothesis illuminates many problematic aspects of female trans-

class reform, including questions of feminine attitude and language. In discussing the debate over the propriety and benefit of higher education for women in the post-Civil War decades, a debate which focused particularly on Vassar, the first feminine institution of higher learning, Rothman astutely notes that what strikes us today about the debates is less the male criticism (along the general lines that college would ruin the health of the young ladies if it did not positively unsex them), than the feminine response to it. With nervous eagerness, the women's institutions displayed their readiness, not to challenge the right of their opponents to criticize them at such an early stage of their venture, but to meet and rebut their challengers on their challengers' terms. Several decades after Vassar had opened, the president of a sister institution, Bryn Mawr, included in the year's annual report the statement that all the college's graduates had "left the college in their best state of health, with the exception of some temporary fatigue that soon passed away." I find here a corollary of what I am calling Rothman's law: woman in professionalizing and modernizing, in this case her very mind and sensibility through education, has made herself vulnerable to the male expertise which already controls the field. She is accepting preformulated male assignments of educational priorities and capacities, and the male methods of proof and justification; and simply by applying these masculine concepts to her feminist enterprise, she is partly defeated.

This analysis can be pressed further, for there is another factor involved which struck me forcibly: the language of condescension in which too many of Rothman's figures cast their aspirations and beliefs. Listen to this statement by the astronomer Maria Mitchell, for years the only major woman scientist on Vassar's faculty. She advised potential donors to Vassar not to offer scholarships for poor girls: "Do not attempt," she cautioned, "to put the daughters of the *very* poor through a college course. It is barely possible that a rare genius may be found even among the unworthy poor, but the chance is so small that we shall waste time looking for it." Mitchell was of course trying to safeguard Vassar's precarious experiment, yet, as Rothman demonstrates, the condescending tone remained current among women reformers in later generations, even among those ostensibly dedicated to helping the "*very*

poor." One female charitable organization at the turn of the century urged its members to go into the homes of the poor, hear the "pitiful" stories of the women there, and create in "sluggish minds a real ambition to make a home." Rothman notes a tendency on the part of women reformers persisting well into this century to "substitute rhetoric and morality for care and assistance." It is critical to realize that this language is outdated as well as patronizing. One old WCTU veteran in the 1920s acknowledged that the young people of the jazz age saw her ilk as "a bunch of old women, as frowsy fanatics." Anyone who reads much of the WCTU literature of the 1920s, as I have done, is painfully aware of the total obsolescence, even at that date, of its flowery style. Once the common linguistic currency of American society, this Victorian language of uplift retained value for ever smaller numbers in post-World War I America.

I have already pointed out that if the reformers talked the language of their critics, they were next to lost. For women to modernize in language and sensibility as well as in action was to patent new devices for the opponent. But I would put it another way: in modernizing they were also losing traditional dignity, however anachronistic and limited, without gaining any power that was uniquely their own. Here is the other side of the dilemma, the flipside of Rothman's law: for not to modernize was to be trapped within outdated and ineffectual class and sex stereotypes on the linguistic, social and economic levels. Damned if you do, damned if you don't.

The consequences of Rothman's law for transclass reform, itself an important aspect of modernization, are obvious. Programs like the Sheppard-Towner Act or Sanger's publicizing of birth control information, intended, no matter with what flaws and biases of design, by their original feminine exponents to cover lower-class as well as middle-class needs, when taken over by largely middle-class male professionals, were inevitably directed toward middle-class applicants alone. Insofar as the reformers' aspirations were middle-class, and no further, they were abetted, if finally outbidded, by their culture.

Analyzing the rationales for these and similar programs, it seems fair to say that middle-class women involved in articulating transclass reform ideals automatically found themselves in an epistemological dilemma—a choice be-

tween two languages, neither adequate—whose easiest resolution was a tacit restatement of their middle-class values in obsolete rhetoric. It seems as striking to me that a number of them resisted these pressures, that they accomplished what they did for the benefit of any class, than that they failed fully to achieve what we, or even they, might define as their goals.

Woman's Proper Place is by no means a chronicle of failure, and certainly not a story of victimization. Rothman distinguishes carefully among her four generations. Her business is not to make heroines, but she clearly admires the Progressives most, abreast of their times, committed to concrete experience in industrial reality, and the present generation of feminists, which has, as previous ones did not, a known past, a present to which they are clearly contemporaneous, and a plural future.

Rothman's tone in closing is one of tempered optimism. She has subjected her sex to rigorous criticism on the tacit assumption, I would guess, that only two groups are willing to hear harsh words about themselves: those like women in the past who are in a subordinate position where they must suffer insults to garner the only compliments culturally available to them; and those who believe that the chances for personal and social amelioration are so good that it is crucial for them to learn where they went right, where they went wrong, where they have been, and where they are going. Drivers need maps, passengers don't. Rothman is not telling the tale of the oppressed and the oppressor. She is elucidating a sociological model of the way power works which is crucial for an intelligent understanding of the past or planning for the future. Every line in Rothman's book points to her belief that women today have the responsibilities that attend power, including that of self-criticism.

Rothman cautions that, in their current insistence on "woman as person," women now form a "vested interest group" in conflict with the many similar pressure groups characteristic of late 1970s society. Rothman does not minimize the drawbacks of this conflicted social arena, especially for the children born into a culture in which neither family nor state assumes the traditional total responsibility for their care. The "solace," however, is precisely in the plurality of opinion, option and action such conflict entails. Surveying the scene before her,

Rothman seems to find a kind of collective commitment to autonomy, rather than ideologically-based action, the most accessible goal. For pluralism, I would hazard, with its emphasis on choice and equality may modify, if not end, the workings of Rothman's law, for it can only operate in a society with a hierarchy of values and a homogeneity of aspiration. Rothman believes history is on the side of feminism. She does not elucidate all the complex reasons why, but her whole argument dictates awareness that a strong woman's movement in a late-capitalist society like ours springs as much from the disintegration as from the maturation of the larger

culture: in some inescapable way, the moments of disadvantage, the ebb, for the dominant culture are the moments of advantage, the high tide, for the subculture. History is on the side of women and their concerns. It is now up to us, Rothman implies, to be on history's side.

Ann Douglas

Ann Douglas is the author of *The Feminization of American Culture* (Avon) and teaches English at Columbia University. She is currently at work on *The Metropolitan Spirit: Modernizing Culture in New York City 1919-1936*.

Soul on Fire by Eldridge Cleaver

(Word Books; \$8.95)

A little over 10 years ago I reviewed Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul on Ice* in *The New Republic*. I said then (and on rereading the book still think) that Cleaver was a gifted writer but one whose particular qualities of rage, resentment and quasi-mystical aspiration in a context of racial struggle put him outside many of our literary canons. The review led to an agitated discussion in the magazine and elsewhere, and to a second essay of mine in which I tried to refine and clarify the distinctions I had drawn in the first piece.

The chief one was between what I called writing of a more or less traditional kind that happened to be by blacks (or "Negroes" at the time; that usage still held sway) and writing of a political and ideological cast that was intended mainly as a source of morale for blacks. My point was that the former could and ought to be judged the way we judge any sort of writing, but the latter, a provisional, tactical sort of thing, resisted—legitimately, I thought—our cultivated, humanistic, "white" standards.

Whatever the virtues or defects of this argument, it's been rendered academic, in Cleaver's case at least, by his new book. *Soul on Fire* has none of the sense of urgency of its predecessor, none of its intelligent participation in crucial issues of the mind and of politics. A slipshod, ill-written, spiritless piece of work from any point of view, its only virtue is that it

provides some information, for those who might feel the need of it, on Cleaver's years in exile, after fleeing the United States while under indictment, in Cuba, Algeria and finally Paris. (There, interestingly enough, he was helped by Giscard D'Estaing, who was finance minister at the time.)

During those seven or eight years Cleaver played a complicated role from afar in the troubled internal politics of the Black Panthers, served as an unofficial emissary of American radicalism to various communist regimes including those of China, North Korea and North Vietnam, fathered two children with his wife Kathleen and found himself growing more and more disenchanted with both his life as an expatriate and his former political beliefs. He was dismayed, he says, after discovering that his little son was playing soccer, "to think that he would not ever play football and know the excitement and challenge of the premier American sport." (Considering soccer's recent cachet here, one might regard this as a mark of how out of touch he is with American reality.)

On a rather more consequential level he began to quarrel with his hosts in the communist countries he visited. "I had heard so much rhetoric about their glorious leaders and their incredible revolutionary spirit," he writes, "that even to this very angry and disgruntled American, it was absurd and unreal. To

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Of course you will cut dead anything
that savors of Richard Strauss
and the stews of Mitteleuropa—
already there has been far
too much fantastication and self-
indulgence, too much brocade
of the Great-Gold-Curtain variety.

Let us have no Big Scenes, no
revelations that come down (stage) to
some diva uneasily
divested of every last sequin
until there she lies, winded,
a stocky body in a body stocking. . .

No, getting her clothes off has nothing
to do with the requirements;
your job is to make certain the girl
has good reason to get dressed!
For months she has been running around
the palace in no more than
a necklace, pestering the staff and
embarrassing visitors
with her endless whining: "Watch me dance!
Watch me dance!" Now you must make
an occasion for her to put on
finery, robe after robe,
until she startles everyone, swagged

and swathed: the image of her mother!
Not until the very end,
though, is the resemblance apparent—
you have to devise something
(ten minutes is what I have in mind)
austere: not only a holding
back from pleasure, but whose suspension
will be a source of pleasure
in itself. Which is why I suggest
you go back, or go sideways,
to the music of other cultures. . .
our own has relied too much
on the passage of time, capitalized

on the lure of forward movement. Now
I want you to overcome
or disregard that sense of direction
toward a final cadence.

A flute should do it, two minor drums
and those brass finger-cymbals
the child stole from one of her mother's
maids when the Romans arrived,
causing so much confusion at Court.

And that's all—easy enough,
I'm sure, for a man of your resources
(let these intentions be made
audible, not these calculations) . . .

Oh yes, one thing more. Just at the end
I need a tremendous touch,
not so much loud as a contrast of
loud and almost inaudible:
thanks to your work, you see, the gestures
of taking on have *taken*,
that is the ritual your little set
of variations (you did
have something of the sort in mind, no?)
incarnates, so when Herod
has her strangled, it is for turning
into Herodias, not
for that business with the head, about

which he couldn't care less. Compose me
a cadence of last resort,
if I may say so, the finality
we lack in Salome's dance
with its circular realizations—
especially if we start
with no more than a sliding scale
from the flute (hard to improve
on Strauss there, but you can find something
even more inevitable,
even simpler). . . The moon is red now
and the stage is dark, except
for Salome, dead in her robes, that woman.

Richard Howard

their irritation and dismay, I continually pointed out that the United States of America had glorified the word "revolution," that we had profoundly contributed to the spirit of political liberty for all people everywhere. It never failed to arouse resentment when I got on this theme. . . ."

No doubt. In any case, his rationale for being in political exile eroded, his hopes for a solution to his problems with the law raised by the advent of a new administration in Washington, Cleaver negotiated for his return and in the late

fall of 1975 left Paris for the States. He had gone into exile as a dramatic and even charismatic figure and returned as a footnote to the history of his times.

Along with his growing patriotism, he tells us, he had experienced while abroad a rising impulse toward religion, which culminated, shortly before his departure from France, in an abrupt and unconditional surrender. Thus the change in the titles of his books from "Ice" to "Fire," reflects, as he says, his movement from the status of a prison inmate to that of a born-again Christian. When it

was revealed a year or so after his return that he had become heavily engaged in evangelical activity the general reaction was, understandably, skepticism, while that of his former associates was compounded of fury and contempt. These things being so, the new book is in large part an effort to establish his sincerity.

Well, such matters aren't properly subject to judgment, except perhaps from a long perspective in which a life may be seen in relation to a credo, and I for one am disposed to grant Cleaver

what he asks. He's sincere, then, but the trouble is that he's become entirely uninteresting.

What's most surprising about Cleaver's change of heart and mind is the complete loss of eloquence it seems to have brought about. *Soul on Ice* was streaked with bad writing, but that stemmed I think from impatience or an excess of vitality and was more than atoned for by the many passages of sharp, accurate, often lyrical description and observation, of which I quote one: "I have, so to speak, washed my hands in the blood of the martyr Malcolm X, whose retreat from the precipice of madness created new room for others to turn about in, and I am now caught up in that tiny space, attempting a maneuver of my own."

Soul on Fire has none of this fineness and originality. The account of his Paul-like conversion, for example, is doubtless honest but it makes for bad literature and probably bad theology too. He is sitting in his vacation apartment near Cannes gazing out on a beautiful night sky. He is depressed, thinking about committing suicide. Suddenly he sees an image of himself, a profile that had been used on Black

Panther posters, in a shadow on the moon, and starts trembling. "As I stared at this image it changed, and I saw my former heroes paraded before my eyes. Here were Fidel Castro, Mao Tse-tung, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, passing in review—each one appearing for a moment of time, and then dropping out of sight, like fallen heroes. Finally, at the end of the procession, in dazzling, shimmering light, the image of Jesus Christ appeared . . . I fell to my knees."

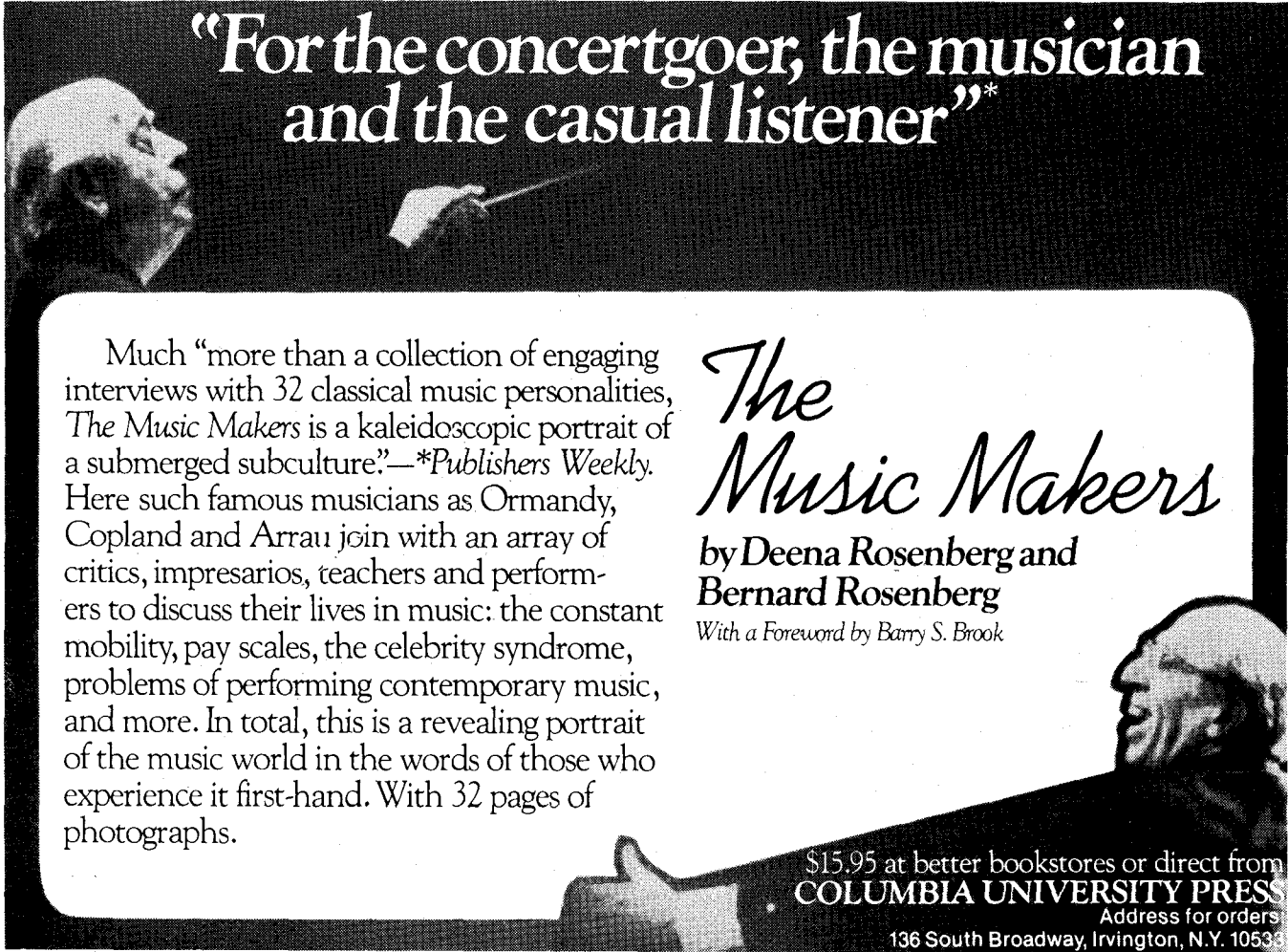
The book is filled with clichés and platitudes, as well as with an astonishing naiveté about what educated readers might or might not be expected to know. When Cleaver talks about going to bed as a child he thinks it necessary to print the entire prayer that begins "Now I lay me. . . ." He says that "it must have rained for forty days and forty nights" and that "American violence is homemade like apple pie." He tells us about California that "orange trees grew wild everywhere, and Hollywood, home and source of the movies, is located in the Golden State." He informs us that the Louvre "is now France's greatest museum but was once the palace of its kings. The Louvre houses the world's largest art collection."

When his writing isn't obvious and simpleminded it's gnarled and pretentious:

A game fowl—a jailbird—in plumage black and red, had broken cover, had risen from its sanctuary in the land of the Gauls.

Young people met in the Haight who had started out walking six months ago, fleeing from the smothering fog of a country lost and wandering blindly through the swamps of its own hypocrisy and rotten with the corruption of its every value. People trekked to the Haight to escape the cacophony of Babylon, the clank and clatter of a trussed up butcher shop of a society busy slaughtering the innocence and conscience of its youth in sleek, swift sacrifice to the dead gods of avarice and power.

It is all very sad. Whether or not Cleaver had the capacity to sustain an intellectual career of any kind at the center of political or cultural issues is debatable, but what's beyond dispute are the losses implicit in this book. The question isn't one of religion in itself but of the peculiar likelihood in America that if one gains faith one has to relinquish thought. Perhaps Cleaver's erratic and wayward talent thrived on a transient conjunction with the pressures and



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dramas of the period; but at least he was connected to it and was able to see and judge.

Now he rejoices in meetings with Billy Graham, and is happy to have Charles Colson as his "brother" and the admiration of one Art DeMoss, president of the National Liberty Corporation of Valley Forge, who describes "Eldridge . . . and the Lord" as "a great combination." These people too are of our time, but at

the cocksure, self-righteous edge of it where there is no space to turn, to "maneuver" the way Cleaver once so brilliantly did.

Richard Gilman

Richard Gilman is a former literary editor of *TNR* and the author of *The Making of Modern Drama* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux).

The Last Romantic: A Life of Max Eastman by William O'Neill

(Oxford; \$14.95)

Crystal Eastman on Women and Revolution edited by Blanche Weisen Cook

(Oxford; \$15.95, \$3.95 pap.)

In 1965, during the rise of the New Left and counterculture, *The New Yorker* ran a cartoon showing a mother and father watching anxiously as their hippie son struts out the door. "Don't worry too much about it," the husband reassures the wife. "Look at Max Eastman. He wound up on *Reader's Digest*."

Eastman's ideological career, however encouraging it may be to the solid citizen, remains a problem to the student of history. The challenge lies not so much in explaining his political shifts as in maintaining some sense of objectivity and perspective. Indeed, anyone familiar with the life of Max Eastman cannot help but feel a mixture of envy, joy and sadness. Perhaps no other American intellectual of the 20th century witnessed more politics, history and cultural change than did Eastman. Few thinkers have been so open to ideas and events, and fewer still have celebrated with such lyrical fervor the qualities of ideas yet experienced, whether they be of love, poetry, happiness, or of those two fetishized abstractions that have beguiled the modern intellectual: the class struggle and competitive capitalism. We envy Eastman's vast and rich life, delight in the exuberance of his mind and radiance of his personality, and thus are all the

more saddened that the ideals for which he struggled—peace, justice, freedom, truth and beauty—eluded him like illusions from an older and more innocent age.

Eastman's importance in American intellectual life can be measured in three dimensions: the scope of the historical events in which he was involved; the friends, comrades and intellectual acquaintances he encountered; and the social theories and philosophical ideas he championed or opposed. The events encompass six turbulent episodes of the 20th century: Greenwich Village and Mabel Dodge's salons; World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution; Lenin's last testament (which Eastman smuggled out of Russia), Trotsky's exile and the anti-Stalinist struggle; the purges, Hitler, and the non-aggression pact; the Katyn massacre and the Gulag camps; the cold war and McCarthyism, Korea and Vietnam. The figures whom Eastman knew or quarrelled with also provide a kind of dramatis personae of modern intellectual life: Dewey and Santayana, Trotsky and Hemingway, Freud and Einstein, Bertrand Russell and Romain Rolland, Edna Millay and Claude McKay, Sidney Hook and William Buckley. And the theories and ideas that Eastman either toyed with,

explored or repudiated—Darwinism, Hegelianism, Marxism, Freudianism; anarchism, socialism, pacifism, feminism; the New Criticism, cultural modernism, naturalistic aestheticism—comprise a survey of modern thought. Reading the life of Eastman is like voyaging through a sea of 20th-century intellectual currents, none of which, with the exception of Marxism and perhaps Freudianism, run deep, but the sense of high adventure is there just the same.

Writing the life of Eastman is another matter entirely, for any biographer confronts three serious difficulties. First of all, Eastman himself wrote down almost everything in his memoirs, *Enjoyment of Living* and *Love and Revolution*, so that a retelling of his story would amount to little more than an extended truism, something we knew all along. Moreover, Eastman wrote so well—his translation of Trotsky's *A History of the Russian Revolution* is only one example of his gift with language—that one cannot paraphrase his prose without feeling a little inadequate or elucidate his ideas without feeling a little pretentious. Finally, Eastman subjected himself to so much painful self-scrutiny about his desires and fears, his political passions as well as his sexual ambitions, that the biographer, and especially the "psychohistorian," may well find that his work has already been done for him and that an "analysis" of Eastman's drives and motives is simply redundant.

William O'Neill's biography, though informative, does little to overcome these difficulties. His attempt to explain Eastman's personality is a case in point. He tells us, accurately, that Eastman had been raised in a female-spirited home where he yearned for the love of his mother, Annis Ford Eastman, and of his adorable sister, Crystal. That Eastman was fully aware of his desires, that indeed his mother's warmth and integrity and his sister's courage and beauty could elicit such natural emotions, O'Neill scarcely considers as he reaches for Freud to explain Eastman's "obsessive" interest in erotic experiences:

Max resolved the problem of how to have sex without committing incest by going with many women. He would have scores, possibly hundreds, of sexual contacts in his long life, but seldom if ever complete intimacy. This strategy worked in that it allowed Max to have an active sex life without becoming disabled. It also saved Max from homosexuality, which often results when a boy has a passive father and dominating mother. But . . . it left the

Oedipal situation unresolved. In important ways Max would never grow up.

These statements suggest the hazards of interpreting adult behavior from childhood experiences. In truth, the great majority of Greenwich Village rebels had been raised in female dominated households; and some, like Harold Stearns and Floyd Dell, pursued women because of sexual insecurities arising from the absence of a strong male model; while others, like Walter Lippmann and John Reed, responded perhaps even more vigorously (Mabel Dodge thought so) by pursuing the event-making heroes of contemporary history—Wilson and Lenin. Many intellectuals in modern history (Bertrand Russell, Thorstein Veblen, Charles Sanders Peirce, to honor only the dead) had been raised by strong, dominant fathers yet became ardent womanizers. One wonders why O'Neill, if he must resort to psychohistory, did not use the Eriksonian framework of ego-psychology. Here, instead of searching for hidden drives and defense mechanisms, as does Freud (whom Eastman described as "a fanatical monogamist"), one might trace the stages of growth that emerge from social interaction and mature self-reflection. Eastman, after all, outgrew his adolescent confusions and hang-ups, and he also overcame his early psychosomatic back ailments; both have about as much relevance in explaining American radicalism as Byron's club foot does in explaining English romanticism.

To do justice to Eastman's life we need to engage in sympathetic understanding, which is not the same thing as suspending critical judgment. It simply means that we understand lest we condemn too hurriedly. When one finds a biographer being prudish about Eastman's affairs of the heart, one is not surprised at finding him being parochial on political matters. Not only does O'Neill proffer advice on whom Eastman should not have married, he instructs us as readers on what political paths he should have taken. "Had he not become so conservative," writes O'Neill of Eastman's later years, "he might have completed his argument in this way. Socialism remains a beautiful dream. In real life it has been proven unnecessary by the welfare states of Scandinavia."

At a time when the idea of the welfare state has come under great attack, and at a time when even communist countries are beginning to recognize the necessity of some market mechanisms, we need a

reexamination of Eastman's case against socialism and defense of free enterprise. In a series of debates with Eastman in *The New Leader* in the 1950s, Sidney Hook effectively demonstrated that a planned economy did not pave the way for totalitarianism. Yet that very argument



Max Eastman in 1960. Photo from *The Last Romantic*.

has been enjoying a revival, and indeed in Paris the "new philosophers" are maintaining that the grotesque realities of Stalinism can be traced back to the misconceived propositions of Marxism, an argument that Eastman propounded 40 years ago. Did the ideology of Marxism render socialists unprepared for Stalin? One should note that in *The New Republic* in 1940 liberalism was held responsible by some writers for rendering America unprepared for Hitler. These highly volatile issues, which attempt to relate political doctrines to historical consequences, absorbed Eastman, Hook, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. and others in the 1940s. An intellectual historian must take them seriously; a biographer can do no less.

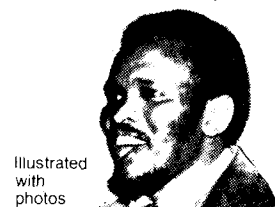
In *The Last Romantic* we discover almost nothing about the content of Eastman's thought, his mode of reasoning and the intellectual sources that influenced his outlook. Instead of an analysis of Eastman's many books, the reader is offered summaries of their reviews. The sole criterion of Eastman's thought seems to be whether it catches on, a standard that makes intellectual biography little more than a popularity contest. Fretting about his continual loss of standing in intellectual circles, O'Neill tells us that Eastman's *The Literary Mind* "managed to alienate almost every critic." True, perhaps; but the argument Eastman put forth—that modernist

literature, if it continues to be nothing more than a stylized performance of "unintelligibility," must forsake the claim of art to interpret experience—is important regardless of the reception. And this is especially so since the idea of art as a "happening" reemerged as a source of controversy in the 1960s, leading Lionel Trilling, who came to admire Eastman, to look upon the antics of the counterculture as "modernism in the streets."

Eastman's critiques of modernism offer only one instance of his many cultural involvements and political struggles. He was the first American intellectual to champion Leninism as an "experiment," and the first to turn against Stalinism as a bureaucratic tyranny, a position he took almost a decade before the "great purges" of 1936. He was the first to oppose the attempt, made by French writers like Henri Barbusse, to subordinate art to politics, and he was the first to expose the suppression of cultural freedom in the Soviet Union. He was the first major American writer to support Trotsky's cause in America and one of the first to foresee the non-aggression pact. He was the first to be informed by Russian

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emigres of the Gulag camp, which he tried desperately to publicize in the 1940s, and he was one of the first intellectuals to approve, however grudgingly, of Joseph McCarthy. He was the first notable figure of the Old Left to support William Buckley's *National Review*, and the first to break with Buckley over the issue of religion. He was the first radical to popularize Marx and Freud, and the first conservative to popularize the economics of Von Mises and Von Hayek and the anthropology of Robert Ardrey. Indeed he was perhaps the first American intellectual to actually reach the masses by writing for *Reader's Digest*, and he was the only American writer whom Stalin honored by singling out as "a gangster of the pen." Turning to "higher" matters, Eastman was the first theorist to bring Freudian insights to bear upon the problem of ideology as "false consciousness"; and he was the first to argue that it was Lenin, not Marx, who had liberated radical thought from the contemplative spell of Hegel, and that it was the philosophical doctrine of the dialectic, and not the historical goals of socialism, that had blinded the Left to the realities of power and the obligations of moral duty—an argument that infuriated Sidney Hook while deeply influencing Edmund Wilson.

Eastman was also one of the first champions of feminism who tried to put theory into practice: he gave his wives and mistresses all the freedom they wanted while himself struggling for the cause of working-class women. These causes also inspired Eastman's remarkable sister Crystal, the subject of Blanche Cook's useful anthology. A woman of tender sentiments and tough-minded intelligence, Crystal not only joined Max in the struggles of feminism, socialism and anti-militarism; she also, as a labor lawyer and commissioner, pioneered legislation in industrial safety and worker's compensation. The anthology contains feminist advice on raising children and making marriage work, proposals against sex discrimination in industrial occupations, and observations on communist Hungary in 1919 that Eastman had published in the *Liberator*, with Crystal recording philosopher Georg Lukacs's views on revolutionary terror.

A news release by the publisher of these two books headlined the event as "Radicals Rediscovered." A nice puff, but neither Max nor Crystal was as forgotten as O'Neill and Cook imply. Chapters on them have appeared in

various studies of American radicalism and feminism. The present books offer tidbits of further information, in some ways valuable since Max and Crystal Eastman are legendary figures in American history about whom we can never know enough. O'Neill informs us, for example, that Eastman was "still having love affairs" at the age of 71. Eastman had spent some of the best years of his life pondering Hegel and

Marx. Somehow the secret of perpetual passion seems more important than the riddle of dialectical negation.

John P. Diggins

John P. Diggins is professor of history at the University of California and author of *Up From Communism* (Harper & Row), and *The Bard of Savagery: Thorstein Veblen and Modern Social Theory* (Seabury).

Secrets and Surprises by Ann Beattie

(Random House; \$8.95)

Secrets and surprises might seem like unexpected specialties for Ann Beattie. In the pages of *The New Yorker* and of her two previous books—*Distortions*, a collection of short stories, and *Chilly Scenes of Winter*, a novel—she anatomizes the everyday lives of characters who are headed nowhere in particular and are unfamiliar with the usual literary kind of secrets and surprises—the kind associated with epiphanies. But as Beattie has hinted all along and emphasizes in this new collection of short stories, hidden knowledge and unexpected discoveries are also staples of ordinary, undramatic life. They don't just belong to rare moments, and they don't necessarily irradiate life with significance. Her characters are lonely and can't help having secrets; they are used to being taken aback by the unexpected because they foresee little and control less. Their lives don't really change after they acknowledge their secrets to themselves or partially reveal them to others. Instead, another disorderly day dawns. In the appropriately uninflected prose and loosely structured stories of *Secrets and Surprises* Beattie makes the days and characters come to life—almost paradoxically—more powerfully and poignantly than she has before.

The days Beattie depicts, however nondescript they are, are not the 9-5 mainstream kind. She writes about her own contemporaries, who turned 20 and lethargically offbeat as the 1960s came to an end. They lead marginal lives out in the country or on the fringe of cities. A

character in *Chilly Scenes of Winter* articulates the feeling that pervades almost every story: "'Everybody's so pathetic,' Sam says. 'What is it? Is it just the end of the sixties?'"

It's not that the 1960s have left Beattie's characters bitterly disillusioned about politics or society; the decade has simply drained them. They aren't motivated by any ambitions of their own, or by external goals or expectations. Instead of looking out for number one or trying to be respectable, they look to friends, with whom they often share a kind of communal esprit, although nothing as concrete as a commune. In her stories, Beattie shows from up close how ambiguous these friendships can be, how many secrets and surprises they can hold.

In fact, her longest story is entitled "Friends." There Beattie evokes in rich detail the amorphous scene of drifting friends—and lovers, since that is what many of the friends have been or wish they were—that sets the tone for the whole collection. Perry, the protagonist, has abandoned the lonely project of winterizing his Vermont house to join a crowd of old friends—gathered from various outposts in New England—for a partying weekend at Francie's house in New Hampshire. The first night there, when all the guests are sprawled drunkenly about the house, Perry retreats to the attic mattress he has appropriated after countless weekend visits.

Waiting to fall asleep he thought about what Francie had told him recently: that he was her

best friend. 'A woman should have another woman for her best friend,' Francie said and shrugged, 'but you're it.' 'Why would you have to have a woman for a best friend?' he said. She shrugged again. 'It's hard for men and women to be best friends,' she said. He nodded and she thought he understood, but all he meant to acknowledge was that they were close, but that there was also something hard about that. What it was, was that it had never been the right time to go to bed with her, and if he did it after all this time, he would have been self-conscious.

In any case, there is barely a moment for unassertive Perry to divulge his secret love in the confusion of friends—a band of rock musicians, a "spacy" woman and her baby daughter, a neurotically hypersensitive teacher, and an array of other flaky types—dropping in and out, breaking up and making up. But there is no place for frustration or resentment to mount in Beattie's diffuse atmosphere; ambivalence prevails. "Sometimes it bothered him that he was just one of the people she liked to have around all the time, although it meant a lot to him that they had all been friends for so long." Beattie unobtrusively displays truly remarkable imaginative insight and accomplished control in her evocation of Perry's low-key preoccupation. As she showed in *Chilly Scenes of Winter* in her exhaustive portrayal of her lovelorn protagonist, Charles, she is at home in the emotional life of men—attuned to their hopes, reveries and romantic longings, which interest her more than their lusts.

Beattie's central theme is one that calls for variations; for the relationships she describes are distinguished by seeming—at least to those involved in them—not to follow any standard pattern. Commitments are unclear, expectations unformulated and communications faulty. Beattie imagines variations in all their minute particularity in her stories; and this collection of them conveys an often dispiriting sense of the common underlying muddle.

The general outline of "Friends" reappears in "A Vintage Thunderbird" and "Colorado," and Beattie comes the closest she ever does to suggesting a representative predicament. Nick and Robert, the protagonists of these stories, are best friends with Penelope and Karen respectively, but secretly wish they were more. The women, enigmatic themselves and not very understanding of others, meanwhile move in with and out on other men.

GRAVEYARD

A writing I can't read myself; the picture
Of my father, taken a couple of years
Before he died; he is sitting alone some place
I don't know; maybe one of the meetings
He took to going to, trying to keep
His place in the world; he is smiling a little,
Cigarette smoke drifting away; he looks
Courteous, as always, not easy to know.

The side of a hill, nothing but a place;
Grass, dirt, a few scattered sticks, some stones,
The shadow of a tree; *Eurydice*,
My father; speaking the words as they are spoken
The meaning closes itself up; a manuscript
Written in a language only the dead speak.

David Ferry

Neither Robert nor Nick makes the move to surprise his friend with an admission of his love; but each is always there to deal with the surprises visited upon him by that friend. The surprises—even those that directly affect the friendship, as when Penelope suddenly proposes to Robert that the two of them leave "stifling" New Haven and head for Colorado—are not decisive turning points; they are barely registered as ripples in the general drifting course of their lives. It's details, however, more than situation outlines (there really are no plots) that count for Beattie and that she makes weigh with us. She describes the nondescript, accounts for moments that usually slip away between eventful hours, notes unconnected thoughts that pass through her characters' minds, records minute details—"the little crust of salt on her bottom lip." The ineluctable but unpredictable daily progress of lives on her pages seems familiar, in a depressing yet also reassuring and even enlightening way; days in real life have the same mixture of commonplace outline and mysterious detail.

Beattie adds familial relations to other of her stories, and she shows that blood ties don't clarify or secure matters between characters. In "La Petite Danseuse de Quatorze Ans" the famous artist fathers of Griffin and Diana are part of the cause of their having a relationship in the first place and all of the cause of the complications of it. (In fact, the father fixation so dominates that we miss the disparate array of minor preoccupations Beattie usually gathers about her characters and apparently artlessly arranges.) The ironic narrator of "The Lawn Party," one of

the best stories in the collection, returns to his parents' house for the Fourth of July with his daughter, without his wife, and without his arm, which he has lost in a car accident with his wife's sister, the woman he really loved. He refuses to join his relatives on the lawn but does not really escape them. Instead he distracts himself from serious solitary brooding with sardonic banter with emissaries sent to rouse him—and even with his student/friend who might be a real companion. Beattie explores the claims of siblings in "Deer Season," where two sisters try to rearrange their stultifying life together when a past common lover returns, and in "A Clever Kids Story," which depicts a sister's effort to come to terms with her memory of her youthful adoration of her brother. As usual, there is no final reckoning for Beattie's characters, just a trying process of reacting—usually with an unsettling lack of feeling or energy—to demands and events they don't control and can't neatly reconcile.

Other stories are about stranger human contacts—about relationships that emphasize the root sense of isolation and enigmatic detachment latent in all her stories. In "Distant Music" Sharon and Jack, who share "a hatred of laundromats, guilt about not sending presents to relatives on birthdays and Christmas, and a dog—part Weimaraner, part German Shepherd—named Sam," meet in Washington Square on Friday to spend the weekend together and trade Sam for the next week. Sharon is silent and not used to being loved; and she seems strangely unperturbed when Jack leaves her and when Sam, grown vicious, is put away. In "Octascope," a less successful story,

another passive woman and her baby move in with a marionette-maker, sight unseen. She longs, almost desperately, for facts about him, words from him: "I have to know if we are to stay always, or for a long time, or a short time," she says. Instead, the two of them talk of eggs and beehives. There is a lot of disquieting, empty space in these stories—in the characters' heads and hearts and in the holes between characters.

But Beattie sees more than blank-

ness. The secret she shares with us in acutely captured moments and carefully recorded details is of the unobtrusive but crucial presence of generous impulses and good intentions in lives that are lonely and undirected, in friendships that are full of ignorance and confusion. And at a time when hopelessness and bleak isolation are assumed in much fiction—and are never very far from her own—that is a surprise.

Ann Hulbert

The Spirit of Liberalism by Harvey C. Mansfield Jr.

(Harvard University Press; \$13.50)

*But in her Temple's last recess inclos'd,
On Dulness' lap th' Anointed head repos'd.
(Dunciad, Book III)*

Harvey C. Mansfield Jr. has written "a defense of liberalism by a friend of liberalism." Professor Mansfield, who teaches government at Harvard University, is a scholar of manifest intelligence and considerable erudition. He is also moderately adept at ideological swordplay, not above twisting a phrase a bit for effect. His principal target here—the etiolated "liberalism" that passes for political thought in contemporary America—is certainly worth another attack, even at this late date. So *The Spirit of Liberalism* ought to be a provocative book, an enjoyable book, a good read. And yet I found myself pressing through it as if caught in one of those nightmares about running in quicksand. The book has no life, no lift, no capacity to carry the reader along from page to page and chapter to chapter. As I plodded on, dutifully reminding myself that the first task of the reviewer is actually to read the book, the question thrust itself ever more insistently upon me: why is this book so dull?

Is it too long? Scarcely! It runs—or rather drags—to only 114 pages, plus skippable notes. That much reading of Marcuse or Friedman, Galbraith or Goodman, or even, heaven help us, Irving Kristol, would be (as Immanuel Kant put it in the *Critique of Pure Reason*) "rather an amusement than a labor."

Perhaps the trouble lies in the fact that this is not a new work, merely a collection of occasional essays and book reviews that have appeared during the last decade, with a single previously unpublished chapter to complete the volume. But Mansfield exhibits no significant changes of mind in these essays, such as might deprive them of philosophical unity, and the several chapters hold together quite as well as one could ask of any book that is polemical rather than constructive. Nor, as I have already suggested, is the difficulty in Mansfield's prose. To be sure, it is overwrought, frequently compressed to the point of turgidity, sometimes arch in an attempt at humor. But the standards of prose style in the writing of political theory are currently not high, and Mansfield can surely claim to have exceeded the minimally tolerable by a quite safe margin.

So if we are to decipher the riddle of Mansfield's dullness, we must attend to the content, rather than to the style, of his discourse. What is Mansfield's thesis? What does he want to say?

The simple answer seems to be this: liberalism, by the 1960s, had grown complacent and feeble as a political theory. Accustomed to fending off feeble attacks from the right, it was totally unprepared for the onslaught from the left. The New Left quickly overpowered the old Center, leaving no strong voices to defend the traditional liberalism of the Founding Fathers. Mansfield will recall us to the wisdom of

our fathers, partly by a series of penetrating attacks on the meretricious teachings of the New Left, partly by an invocation of half-forgotten truths about human nature and the moral order, legitimate authority and the public world.

In conception, this is undoubtedly coherent, if a trifle lacking in novelty. In execution, however, it fails dismally, for four more or less connected reasons. The most obvious weakness of Mansfield's enterprise is his failure to confront in any systematic way the New Left attackers whose too-easy successes against liberalism have ostensibly inspired these essays. Five authors are subjected to critical scrutiny in one or another of the six slender chapters: Theodore Lowi, Charles Reich, Robert Dahl, Robert Nozick and John Rawls. Lowi can, I suppose, be counted among those of us who, in the 1960s, called the established liberal ideology into question, although his proposals for "juridical democracy" hardly earn him the honored title "radical." Charles Reich's *Consciousness III* is buffoonery, about which the less said the better. Robert Dahl is part of the problem, not the solution. And perhaps the most charitable conclusion one can draw from Mansfield's treatment of Nozick and Rawls is that he is not entirely comfortable with formal philosophical argumentation.

Still an inadequate target is not an insurmountable obstacle to a polemicist of sufficient talents, as Marx's famous assault on Nassau Senior demonstrates, so we must search on for the sources of Mansfield's failure. A deeper problem is the perpetual shift of our author's point of view. In any particular passage, it is usually clear what he is against, but from page to page, there is little continuity in the reasons for his disenchantment. Mansfield presents himself as a "friend of liberalism," but in what is perhaps the least self-concealing passage in the book, he reveals himself (if I understand him) to be a mortal enemy of liberalism whose principal criticism of the left is its complicity in liberalism's own inherent failings. Here is Mansfield, bringing to a close his critique of Lowi: "Liberalism in one or several of its forms or perversions will last as long as the opposition to it does not question the Machiavellian premise that all government is essentially oppression. The premise has been questioned, not by idealists but by the ancient writers who constitute the true alternative to liberalism. Failing a revival

of their thought, which would require a radical questioning of all modernity, one who wishes to understand liberalism from without can use its two tendencies, moralistic or mundane, according to the times." This passage seems to say that Mansfield is against liberalism in any of its "forms or perversions." But does it? It seems to imply that radical critics of liberalism have been weakened by their belief that all government is oppression. But that is an anarchist doctrine, and almost none of the 1960s radicals were anarchists. What does emerge from this and other passages is Mansfield's poignant longing for the old ways of thought, the old texts and the ancient doctrines, however unsuited they may be to an understanding of our present social situation.

Which brings me to the third cause of Mansfield's inadequacy, his anachronistic invocation of bygone philosophers, in particular Aristotle, without the slightest suggestion of an awareness that some adjustment of their eternal insights might be required before they can be deployed in contemporary philosophical arguments.

*To future ages may thy dulness last,
As thou preserv'st the dulness of the past.*
(Ibid.)

In his famous essay, "Renaissance and Renaissance," Erwin Panofsky calls our attention to the curiously atemporal quality of medieval iconography and political discourse. Instances from biblical Judea, classical Greece, pagan Rome, and Christian Europe are jumbled together with no apparent sense of historicity, no awareness of the relation between symbol or doctrine to time, place and culture. Much the same archaic naivete clings to Professor Mansfield's discourse. Writing on the right of revolution, for example, Mansfield suggests that "to understand [it], one must try to recover from it the element of choice which is neglected by both left and right and suppressed by educated opinion. To do this, I propose to look at choice and necessity in the Declaration [of Independence], to consider the later submergence of choice in conservatism and in Marxism, and then to reach back for a more original view in a classical source, the political science of Aristotle."

Now, as a philosopher, and what is more as an historian of philosophy, I have an ineradicable prejudice in favor of any author who takes the old texts seriously. But there is an air of pious invocation, of appeal to authority rather

than to argument and insight, that deprives Mansfield's reversion to the ancients of any genuine philosophical power. We are not told *why* the reading of Aristotle's *Politics* will help us in our diagnosis of liberalism and its opponents, merely *that* it will.

And so, at last, we come to the very heart of the failure of this little book. Mansfield either does not have, or cannot bring himself openly, forthrightly and unequivocally to state, a conception of human nature and a moral philosophy from which his polemical attacks originate. We do not know where he stands, and so we cannot tell whether we ourselves stand with him or against him. What is the theory of moral personality from which Mansfield surveys the contemporary scene, and what arguments is he prepared to advance in support of it? We are never told. Does he in fact endorse the position of the Founding Fathers (skimpy as its philosophical content is), or—as the passage quoted earlier suggests—does he reject it for the wisdom of the ancients?

In the end, what makes a political discourse coherent, consequential,

forceful—and hence easy to read—is the author's willingness to take a stand on some significant question, to state his or her arguments without diversion or misdirection, and to stand ready to receive counterarguments from those who disagree. In short, moral courage and not quickness of wit is the key to intellectual clarity. Professor Mansfield, following the unfortunate example of the late Leo Strauss, so thoroughly buries his convictions that the reader is fatigued by the struggle to disinter them.

I do not think I would agree with Professor Mansfield, were he to come out from behind the protective language of these essays and argue his own considered position, but I am certain that I would find the effort to engage with him more stimulating, more rewarding, and far less tedious than I found the reading of this book.

Robert Paul Wolff

Robert Paul Wolff teaches philosophy at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

Alarm and Hope

by Andrei D. Sakharov

edited by Efrem Yankelevich and Alfred Friendly Jr.

(Alfred A. Knopf; \$8.95 and Vintage paperback; \$1.95)

This collection of Sakharov's essays, letters and public statements covers what has perhaps been the most agonizing period in the history of contemporary political dissent in the Soviet Union, starting with the hopes aroused by the two sessions of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki, summer 1975 and Belgrade, 1977-78), followed by the forceful championship of human rights and of the Soviet dissidents by the new American president, and ending with the savage sentences passed on Yuri Orloff, Alexander Ginzburg, Alexander Scharansky *et al* in the summer of 1978. For Sakharov, the Soviet decision to crush the "movement for human rights" at home and discredit its supporters abroad constituted not only a blow to

the policy he had long been urging the West to adopt, but also to the extraordinary role he had come to play in the Western debates on detente and East-West relations in general. "It is essential," says Sakharov in his "Afterword" to this book, written in May 1978, "to employ all possible leverage—discreet and public diplomacy, the press, demonstrations and other means that strike at prestige, boycotts, cancellations of cooperative activities . . . , legislative limitations on trade and contacts similar to the Jackson-Vanik amendment, prisoner exchanges—to save the individual victims of tyranny" and above all, "to reverse the practice of arbitrary rule" in the USSR.

This, in effect, has been the message, so deceptively simple in its conception

yet so elusive in its implementation, which Sakharov has tried to impress upon Western public opinion over the past decade or so. It is a message that informs his Nobel Peace Prize lecture of December 1975, and it lies at the heart of the various appeals he has addressed to the world, to such diverse bodies as the Conference of European Communist Parties (June 1976) and the International League of Human Rights (September 1976), and to Western statesmen such as British Prime Minister James Callaghan and Jimmy Carter—all of which are reproduced in the volume under review.

For a while, it seemed as if Sakharov's eloquent words elicited not merely respect and admiration, but a meaningful political response as well. By January 1977, President Carter himself felt impelled to assure the Soviet physicist, in a personal letter, that "the American people and our government will continue our firm commitment to promote respect for human rights not only in our country but abroad." In the months that followed, American and West European newspapers were filled with interviews with and articles by and about Sakharov. In November the second "Sakharov Hearing" took place in Rome (the first having been held in Copenhagen a few years earlier), where a number of witnesses from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe testified on violations of human rights in their countries. A few days later, Sakharov was the principal speaker in *absentia* at the yearly AFL-CIO convention in Los Angeles. Yet at the same time Sakharov's personal situation and that of his fellow dissidents drastically deteriorated. One by one his closest friends and associates were picked up by the police and thrown into jail, while Sakharov and his family were subjected to vituperative attacks in the press, official threats, harassments and reprisals. By the summer of 1978, it became painfully clear that the "practice of arbitrary rule" in the Soviet Union had not only *not* been "reversed" but, if anything, had been demonstrably strengthened and affirmed.

In his otherwise informative and sensitive introduction to *Alarm and Hope*, Alfred Friendly notes that "considering his background as a theoretical rather than experimental scientist, Sakharov's relative indifference to pragmatic considerations is not surprising." What Friendly has in mind is clearly Sakharov's growing disenchantment with the results of his tireless efforts, the recurrent notes of gloom and

despair, his candid admissions that—as Friendly puts it—"he may hope for nothing but nonetheless speak because he cannot, simply cannot remain silent." Yet as borne out by the documents selected by Friendly and Yankelevich (the latter Sakharov's son-in-law, now in the United States), Sakharov's commitment to moral imperatives is surely wedded to a sense of political reality. Indeed, what is so singularly impressive about Sakharov's writings is precisely his moderation, his attention to practical details, his aversion to facile optimism and utopian rhetoric or for that matter to the querulous bitterness and anger that characterize the pronouncements of, say, Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

Only a man animated by a desire for pragmatic results would ceaselessly remind his Western audience of the names of political prisoners in the Soviet Union. Only a man who disdains demagoguery would describe the Soviet system in such sober terms as he does, for instance, in his essay "Alarm and Hope," or would emphasize—this despite his pleas for Western pressures and economic leverage as a means of exacting concessions from Moscow—that "disarmament must have first

priority," that it "is absolutely unacceptable, even for a goal as important as human rights—to make conduct in that area a precondition for disarmament negotiations." Only a person with a grasp of the dynamics of the political process would welcome as "highly significant" the tendency of "influential West European Communist parties" to move "away from pro-Soviet dogmatism toward classical social-democratic ideology." The fact that Sakharov's efforts have not been crowned with success can hardly be taken as proof of lack of wisdom or perspicacity. Rather, it is a melancholy comment on the complexities inherent in any effort to work out an effective policy toward the Soviet Union—complexities that have bedeviled far more powerful men than the beleaguered and hounded Nobel Prize winner in Moscow.

Abraham Brumberg

Abraham Brumberg, editor of *In Quest of Justice—Protest and Dissent in the Soviet Union Today*, is now a guest scholar at the Kennan Institute for Higher Russian Studies in Washington, DC.

The Good Word and Other Words by Wilfrid Sheed

(Dutton; \$10.95)

Wilfrid Sheed is an uncommonly deft critic, yet if I had spent years writing a biography, say, I'm not sure I'd want him to review it: he'd be very likely to scoop out the tasty bits and weave them into a wry little essay that would barely mention my book; worse, that would make my hard breathing efforts to explain what made my subject tick look fatuous or flatfooted. "So that's what X was all about!" "Why didn't I think of that?" I imagine the authors Sheed reviews must say such things—before they start in on his ancestors.

They're at least, my angry authors, partly right. Sheed is not your usual reviewing hack. He is a novelist—a prolific and accomplished one; nine novels, two nominees for the National Book Award—at large among other people's books. His reviews are the word pictures which the books have stirred in

his imagination, an uncommonly droll organ whose productions are never less than interesting, even though to capacious readers and slighted authors they will not pass as book reviews. Sheed is disarmingly honest about this. The truths of his kind of reviewing, he says, "are the truths of fiction. The books are events that happened to me and are as open to misinterpretation as my neighbors on the Siege of Chicago in 1968. Along with one's novels, these pieces form a mosaic of someone coming of age in a certain time and place and what he made of it."

To judge by the array of first-rate pieces in this collection, Sheed has made the witty most of whatever he has reviewed, and this is certainly worth a salute. But it is also true that he has stayed with subjects some might judge minor, subjects that positively require

something to be made of them. Apart from an illuminating glance at Joseph Heller's *Something Happened*, there are no really problematic modern books or authors discussed here: no Pynchon, no Marquez, no Borges, no Nabokov. In short, there are no texts by a really imperial mind—a mind Sheed would have to deal with on its own terms, not on his.

Sheed may shy away from the literary heights, but, on the strength of his novelist's warrant, he ranges compensatingly far into the great unexplored reaches of American culture. He has, for example, written a masterfully thorough and revealing guide to the labor movement and a funny debunking essay on the Mafia. In this collection he waxes wry on an astonishing variety of subjects. There are essays on Orwell, Hemingway, Wodehouse, E. B. White and W. C. Fields. There is a witty rumination on the "I was a vampire for the Chicago Bears" school of football exposé; and there is an extraordinary essay in cultural history which sets our clock for the start of the Beat Movement back 10 years, to the Columbia of Thomas Merton rather than that of Allen Ginsburg. Catholics, ethnics, Dr. Spock, Watergate, are a few of the other subjects on which Sheed has a good, and often a superb word to say. Indeed, from this motley of cultural occasions he has fashioned a book that boosts one's flagging faith in the possibility of literary criticism. For all his waywardness in handling texts, Sheed performs the Arnoldian office of sorting out our moral confusions and modulating our enthusiasms and condemnations, so that we may "see the object as in itself it really is."

Sheed's virtues as a critic begin with his irresistibly engaging opening sentences. "The literature of nausea has come to professional football," is the sprightly start of one piece. Another begins, "If you like to think of fictional art as a branch of magic, authors' jacket photos have to be a terrible disappointment." Try *not* reading a review that begins on that perky note. Finally, imagine the portentous opening most reviewers would write to A. Alvarez's *Savage God*. Here's Sheed's: "Books about suicide make lousy gifts, and many people think it's unlucky to have them around the house as well."

These first sentences are, I think, emblematic of Sheed's whole critical talent: whatever illumination or instruction he offers—a great deal, usually—will be served up with dollops of delight.

So you have to read these pieces twice: once for the funny lines (Sheed on an intimate biography of W. C. Fields: "Any book by a chorine that starts out, 'I can't deny that he was an anomaly,' is going to be hilarious"); and once for the wisdom beneath them.

Wisdom? That sentence about suicide continues: "So A. Alvarez's excellent *Savage God* may wind up more talked about than bought. A pity, because the book is also about life, just as suicide is about life, being in fact the sincerest form of criticism life gets." That sounds like wisdom to me, and typically it's wrapped up in a throwaway line, which may be the only way we can take such observations.

You get to the bottom of Sheed's wisdom by sorting through his throwaway lines and taking into account the unsentimental but humane understanding he displays toward such sufferers as Dorothy Parker, E. B. White and F. Scott Fitzgerald. What emerges is a vision of what men and women are and can be that is summed up in a sentence from an earlier collection of essays: "It was just human nature batting its usual 250." The style is characteristic; the estimable Walter Clemons calls it "Cardinal Newman meets Ring Lardner." But so is the sentiment. Sheed is one of those rare intellectuals who doesn't deplore the fact that most of us bat 250; he accepts it. He calls it life.

He calls literature "the one subject in the world one cannot be priggish about," and he's singular in this, too, remarkably free of literary spirituality. To him literature isn't a kind of religion, as it is to those critics—most of the critics who matter—who were bitten by the bug of high seriousness at CCNY in the 1930s or, later, when the bug had moved uptown, at Columbia in the 1940s. To Sheed, the English Catholic, the Church has a monopoly on the religious impulse. He looks to literature for what it can give: wit, intelligence, style, and occasionally, some refracted light on reality.

Because Sheed is so free of the higher seriousness himself, he is devilishly adept at spotting it in others. To Irving Howe's complaint that Philip Roth, in not exploring the "real pathos" of Mrs. Sophie Portnoy, has caricatured Jewish life, Sheed's demur is resonantly typical: "But what would have happened to the book's manic drive, its unique tone, if he had done that? . . . Critics should look to these technical problems before they reach for the moral ones." At Richard Kostelanetz's plausible grouse that

there is a New York literary mafia—a hydra-headed creature made up of magazines with New York in the title—which is out to get him and his friends, Sheed lets fly with common sense. Picture, he says, the overworked young woman from Jersey who does the bulk of the work at these establishments. "Her job is simply to get literate reviews at bargain prices, free of spite and logrolling ('You mean you don't know they fought a duel at Vassar!'), from unpredictable amateurs and reliable hacks. She is not, whatever the result, out to get you."

There you have Sheed at his best, confronting theory with actuality, moralism with art. You get a little too used to these moves as you read piece after piece in this collection; Sheed goes down better in the magazines where he doesn't have to compete with himself. But that's the only complaint you'll hear out of me. Any friend of sanity must be grateful for *The Good Word*.

Jack Beatty

Brief Reviews

Current Fiction

The Confessions of
Josef Baisz
by Dan Jacobson

(Harper & Row; \$10)

In Sarmeda, a fictitious modern police state, in a small northern town called Vliss, a boy grows up. His father, tried for crimes against the republic and sentenced to five years' hard labor, commits suicide. His mother, who runs an unsuccessful shop in the village square, slowly closes out the rest of the world. The boy, Josef Baisz, daydreams a lot, about money he suspects his father has hidden in the house, about power, about the life he would like to lead. He vows to succeed where his father failed, to "know more about others than they knew about me." He begins to learn the ropes of power in Sarmeda, and climbs them. Written after he has been promoted to a high government post, this novel chronicles that climb. Baisz thinks of it as a confession. And for good reason.

Baisz's benefactors become his victims. Captain Serle, for whom he acts as a stool pigeon, hires him as his personal bodyguard. In order to have an affair with Serle's wife, Gita, Baisz pushes Serle down a flight of stairs, thus hospitalizing him. The injury is more serious than planned; Baisz finds himself out of work. Rather than return to ordinary service, he approaches Brigadier Kerrick, rats for him, and although he bungles a job Kerrick gives him, Baisz parlays the failure into another job, spying on General Haifert. The assignment requires him to kidnap Haifert's children; when Haifert commits suicide to escape his predicament, Baisz, as barbarous as Shakespeare's Richard III, woos Haifert's widow.

But plot summary does this book little justice. Baisz's is no ordinary step-on-heads rise to power. He stays Serle's friend, remains Gita's lover, marries Haifert's widow. "Destroy and wash your hands; break and forget—that was the way ahead for your wholehearted careerist," he writes. "I couldn't do it. I loved my victims. I was unable to let them go."

Like Graham Greene's *The Heart of the Matter*, this novel is an extraordinarily lucid study of pity. Baisz pauses occasionally to explore his feelings, or analyze his motives; the progression of these reflective moments creates a strong sense of thematic coherence. Yet the book reads quickly, solidly, like an ongoing adventure. By keeping Baisz's observations honest and fresh, Jacobson has managed to keep inventive a very conventional kind of fiction, the memoir of a scoundrel. Also by keeping Baisz's motives for writing the book mostly a secret until the conclusion, Jacobson has created a strong undercurrent in the story. Near the end of the confession, Baisz writes:

At last I could take Josef Baisz by the throat. At last I could begin to feel for him that soft, loving tenderness which hitherto had been reserved only for his victims. I could even begin to pity him.

Like Greene's novel, this one ends with the self-inflicted death of the protagonist. Baisz's passion, once it

seizes its object, is destructive; self-pity leads him to suicide. It is as if with the finished book before him he has at last seized his own life, made it whole, understandable, and with that understanding comes the realization that there is nowhere else to turn.

Marc Granetz

Marc Granetz is a freelance writer.

Petals of Blood by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o

(Dutton; \$9.95)

Petals of Blood begins in a grimly ironic fashion: police constables in a Kenyan boom town lock up a born-again schoolteacher, an orange peddler, a prostitute and a union organizer. The beginning is ironic because just about a year ago the busy constables also locked up the book's author, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, with the difference that, in the fiction, arrest follows an arson, whereas in real life the police had only to cite Kenya's Preservation of Public Security Act, which requires nothing so specific as a crime to justify someone's detention. Fortunately for the causes of liberty and literature, a new administration has assumed office in Nairobi and last month made the decision to release all political prisoners in a general amnesty. Ngugi, who is Kenya's leading literary figure, has been set free. The Public Security Act remains in place, however, meaning that the independent thinkers of Kenya had still better watch out.

Petals of Blood is said to be one of the offenses against "public security" that the old administration held against Ngugi (along with a play that he had the temerity to write in a native language), and reading it one can see why—from a police point of view. The novel delivers a terrible indictment of Kenyan society. Through the lives of the schoolteacher and his friends, the Mau Mau revolution is shown to have gone from throwing out the Europeans to sweeping the drought-ridden farmers off their land. Each element of the ruling elite—the legendary titans of the revolutionary underground, the politicians, the businessman, the Protestant hierarchy—has taken to mouthing

nationalist and religious homilies in the worst Andrew Carnegie tradition, while pocketing vast sums of money. They are not even first rate Andrew Carnegies, these African bourgeois, for instead of carving out their own empires they merely whittle at the national wealth, dealing land and labor back to the Europeans. The odiousness of this behavior leads the schoolteacher and his companions to conclude that no one short of Jesus Christ can redeem society, or, alternatively, that the dispossessed farmers ought to organize labor unions—and the novel leaves no doubt about which of these is the sounder idea.

Ngugi's plot leans heavily on coincidence, such that every bourgeois pig in Kenya turns out to be one of three fellows, and his pacing nearly drowns in long monologues that reveal each character in turn as a humorless wind-bag. Nevertheless there is a Zola-esque fervor about history and social class here that we see too little of in our own literature. The themes available to Ngugi are big ones. Incidentally, it is a pleasure to spot a few lines from Whitman and Eugene Debs (among other sources) cropping up in an East African setting. This is an anti-imperialist novel but it is not, properly speaking, anti-American.

Paul Berman

Paul Berman is the editor of *Quotations from the Anarchists* (Praeger).

Sherbrookes by Nicholas Delbanco

(William Morrow; \$8.95)

If we fail to master our past, memory can become a burden which blocks our way to life. This dilemma is at the heart of *Sherbrookes*, the ninth novel by 36-year-old Nicholas Delbanco, who teaches at Bennington College in southern Vermont. In a coda to his previous effort, *Possession*, Delbanco continues his saga of the Sherbrooke family. Death has returned to the Big House—the secular cathedral of a house that was the product of the grandiose vision of "Peacock" Sherbrooke in the first novel—with the demise of Judah Sherbrooke, the enigmatic patriarch of the

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present family, who, in both novels, is no less than the spell of the past given human form.

"How might we best live after those who go before? What remedy or comfort can we discover—with our great fathers dead, against this present age?" This is the challenge posed by an ancestral diary, from which excerpts appear throughout *Sherbrookes*. Maggie, whose long struggle with her husband Judah dominated the earlier novel, shakes off her ghosts instinctively, releasing herself from grief and guilt over the death of her young son and the loss of her husband by becoming pregnant again at 52. Ian, 26, the only surviving child of Judah and Maggie, returns to the Big House after Judah's death deeply scarred by the intense love-hate relationship between his parents. While Maggie's strong sense of personal identity allows her to find her peace intuitively, Ian has yet to forge his personality. He must fuse in his own being the extremes of character personified by his parents. He must fight his parents' battle all over again—within himself.

In Hattie, the third major living character in *Sherbrookes*, Delbanco has created one of the most proud-willed, likeable women in recent American fiction, comparable to John Irving's Jenny Garp. Hattie, the 82-year-old spinster sister of Judah, rejected all suitors to marry the Sherbrooke history. Shocked at Maggie's pregnancy, she chooses death rather than life without pride.

Delbanco's vision is fundamentally pessimistic in a time when this view has been criticized as being purely negative and unconstructive, threatening the future of fiction. Yet Delbanco deserves to be read precisely because in confronting his characters with the realities of death and isolation, he gives them compensating acts of love, will and endurance.

Tim Myers

Tim Myers is a freelance writer.

Correction

An error appeared in the last paragraph of "Diarist Abroad," *TNR*, January 13. The third sentence from the end should have read: "In France, the Communist party sees the refugee's cause—their very existence, in fact—as a threat to the stature of the Vietnamese revolution, even as a repudiation of it."

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My ad reads:



THE NEW REPUBLIC MAGAZINE

It was bad enough that the AFL-CIO decided last week to reverse its earlier decision, and to move its next convention from Miami because Florida has not supported the Equal Rights Amendment. But then I ran into a friend, who was just back from the annual gathering of the American Historical Association in San Francisco, and who was outraged because the AHA had decided not to hold its next convention in Chicago because Illinois has not supported the ERA. Let me be clear: I do support the ERA. Unlike even as persuasive an opponent as George Will, I believe that it is necessary, and that the painful absence of progress of women in the past decade of activity, in securing even the most elementary rights, proves how warranted it is. But it is monstrous to bludgeon and blackmail people into supporting it as a constitutional amendment. The women's movement already has created a dangerous precedent in getting an extension to try to gain passage of the amendment. But this further precedent of bringing economic pressure to bear on individual states seems to me even more dangerous. Why should any highly organized lobby—such as the anti-abortionists in Minnesota—not now prevent the AFL-CIO and the historians from going to Minneapolis-St. Paul? There are some methods that ought not to be used in the best of causes—because all too clearly there will be the devil to pay for them in the future—and the women's movement is recklessly crossing that line.

As a friend who is a lawyer said to me, the process of constitutional amendment is made especially rigorous to assure that there is a genuine and reflective consensus in favor of the change. Coercive tactics undermine the whole point of this constitutional rigor. What astounds and appalls me is not only that none other than George Meaney has caved in, not only that the American Historical Association is so cravenly willing to be politicized, not only that so many representatives and senators follow the women's movement's orders as if in pack drill, but that no responsible woman in that movement, herself a supporter of the amendment and its objectives, lifts her voice in warning. Not even the blacks tried to break the constitution in order to change it, to which remark my friend the historian glanced up at me and said,

"There weren't so many of them." If the ERA wins by bullying, the victory will be to bullies, of both sexes and in other causes.

When the foreign policy of a great power, such as America or China, seems to take an abrupt turn, I head for my bunker until the claptrap is over. For what we get are geopolitical theories from the most domestic commentators and politicians. Wall maps are pulled down in columnists' dens, heavy hands are vaguely waved over them and there is muttering about the Chinese heartland. I wish more had the wit of one M. de Navailles, a courtier and soldier of Louis XIV, who served under the Prince de Conde, the son of the great Conde, in Flanders in 1700. When the prince wanted to find the location of a tiny brook, which was not shown in his military maps, and called for another map to help him, Navailles went away and returned with a map of the world. We need something of that spirit in the National Security Council, where geopolitical theories run riot at the drop of a "z" from the name of Zbigniew Brzezinski. But what is one to do when the press itself gets just as excited? What we need are maps of brooks, and fewer maps of the world. It is not a bad beginning, for example, to regard the new agreement between China and America as the British government with their jets, and US Steel with its steel plants, and Robert Strauss all regard it: as a commercial deal of mutual advantage, which Strauss has even said is needed by America to reduce its \$30-billion trade deficit. Geopolitical ideas have too often led too many astray. There is much to be said for fixing one's eyes on profits, and closing one's ears to the prophets of world movements.

Does it matter to the rest of the country that Washington has a new mayor? Does it matter even to Washington? I think that it does matter, and that we should keep our fingers crossed in hope. The capital has undergone an enormous change since it burned in 1968. It really looks like, and feels like, a capital at last. What is more, this is only the beginning. It may be riches and power, not always at their most attractive, that have caused the development. But what are capitals but riches and power? Florence and Venice were not built on austerity and meekness. The now imminent redevelopment of Pennsylvania Avenue

and the Federal Triangle has one avowed object: to shift the focus of the millions of tourists who come each year to see their capital away from the Mall, and to draw them to the city proper. This extraordinary opening up of the city north of the Mall has all the civic and commercial energy that one associates with the Renaissance cities of Italy, or the burghers of Rotterdam or Amsterdam at the height of their prosperity. It reminds me of two rebuildings in the past: that of London after the Great Fire in 1666, and of Paris in the heyday of Napoleon III. The opportunities are equaled by the dangers. There is much for grasping hands to seize—not only those of the developers, but those of whole classes of people, like the ever more prosperous whites who are streaming into the city. It will matter a lot, to the city and to the country of which it is the capital, if its new mayor, Dr. Marion Barry, can exert a strong civic control over the whole development. The choice is between building a Babylon and building a . . . Washington.

Someone gave me the current issue of *Soldier of Fortune*, "The Journal of Professional Adventurers." It does not have a bunny as its center-page spread. Instead there is the picture of man, dressed as if for a New Year masquerade, waist-deep in a jungle swamp, who is presented to us as "Michael Echanis. A professional warrior. Born 16 November 1950, Nampa, Idaho. Died 8 September 1978, Lake Nicaragua, Nicaragua." There is naturally a full-page advertisement that warns of the dangers of "gun confiscation" in the United States, although one wonders why, when the magazine shows what can be done with a kitchen knife or a butcher's cleaver, guns are so necessary to "preserve freedom." As I leafed through the magazine, a thought strayed into my mind. The gun lobby in this country would have not the slightest difficulty in organizing a boycott against any state that voted for a constitutional amendment to change the wording about "the right to bear arms." Even more than the women's movement is able to do, it would terrorize Congress, state legislatures, unions, and no doubt again the historians. I wish some of the woman organizers would think of that.

H.F.

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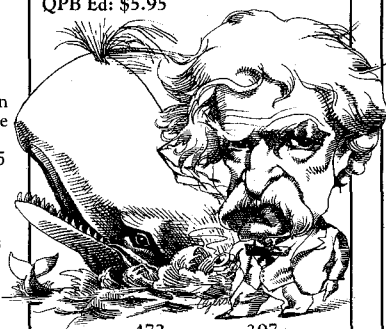
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